THE BEATLES YEARS

VOL.3

The making of the MASTERPIECES

Burnt out from touring
The Beatles hit new creative
heights in the studio

COLLECTOR'S EDITION VOL.3 OF 4

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WELCOME

John Lennon was the first to announce he'd had enough, but by the end of the 1966 world tour they were all in agreement – after six years of relentless touring, The Beatles were burnt out and retiring from live performance. "1966 was just dangerous, you know," recalled George Harrison in *Anthology*, "because everybody was out of hand. Even the cops were out of line. They were all just caught up in the mania."

Their performances were below par. "We were playing crap," recalled Ringo. But it was the death threats, bomb scares and the mass burning of their records in the Deep South that took their toll. "It was like the plot of *Help!* had become real and they actually had a lot of people who suddenly wanted to dismember them," recalled Jon Savage.

Issue three of *The Beatles Years* picks up the story at this point, as the band retire from live performance and immerse themselves in the rich potential of the recording studio. What followed were the two albums widely regarded as their masterpieces: *Revolver* and *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Here, we take an in-depth look at the creation of these works, assessing how The Beatles, along with George Martin and young engineer Geoff Emerick, pushed the creative and technological boundaries to new heights.

We examine the impact of manager Brian Epstein's death, The Beatles' subsequent spiritual quest to India, the chaos of the *Magical Mystery Tour* TV film, the surreal animation of *Yellow Submarine* and the well-meaning yet thoroughly misguided business that was Apple Corps.

This was the era in which The Beatles created some of their most sublime music and issue three of *The Beatles Years* captures the whole inspiring story.

Neil Crossley
Editor

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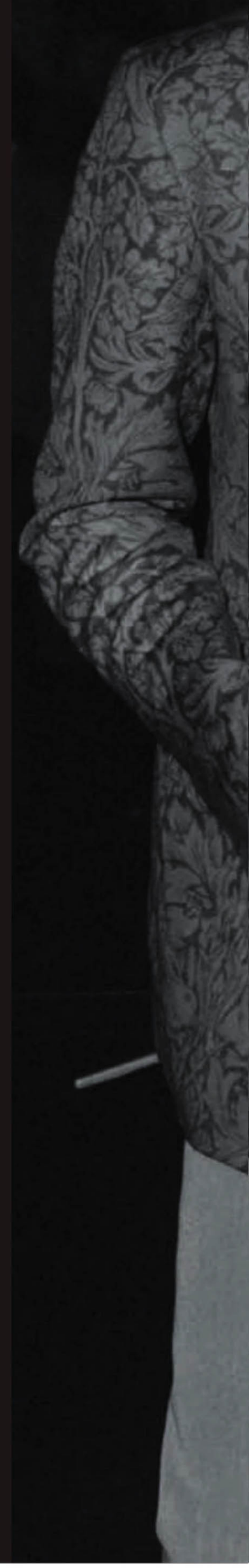

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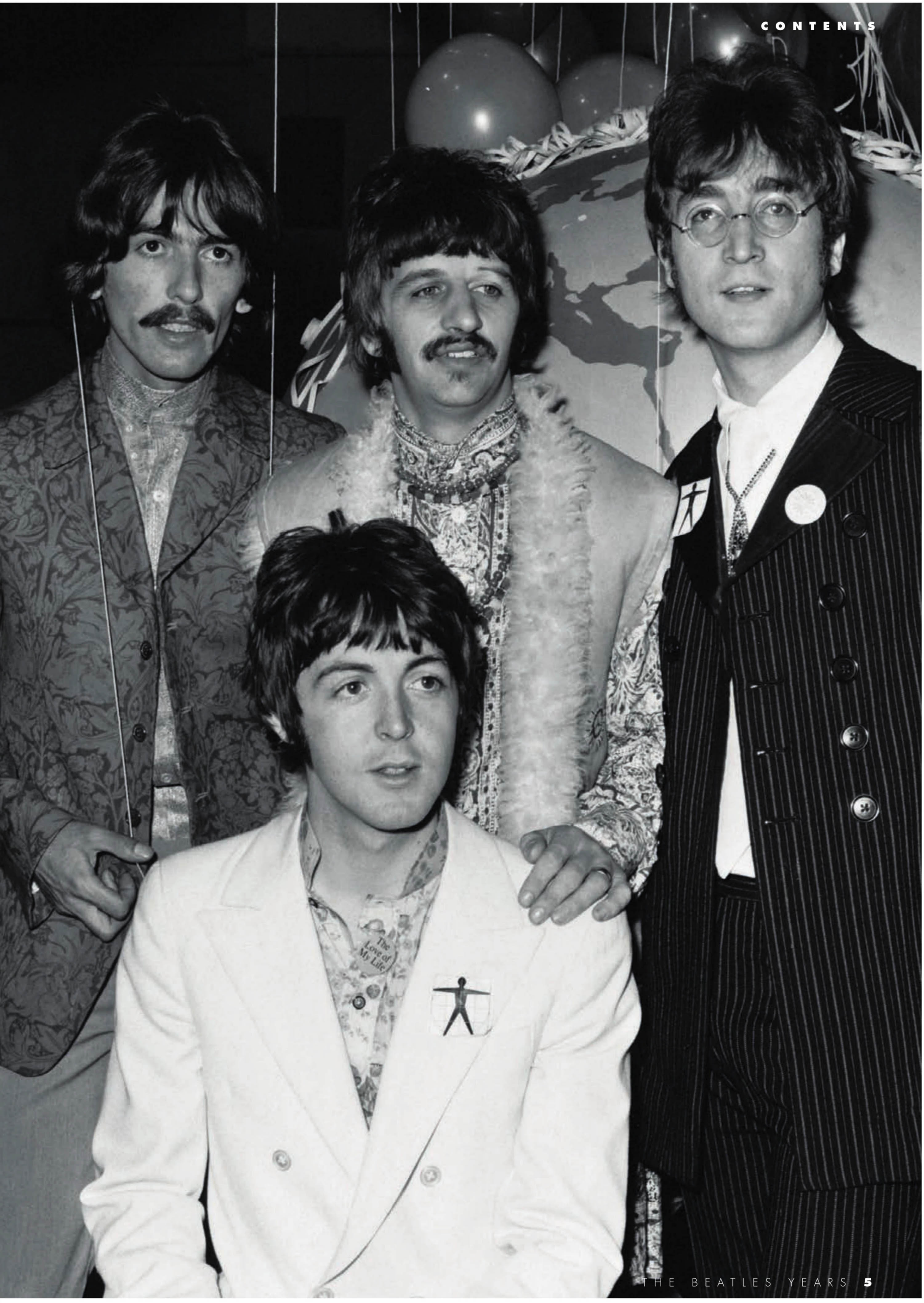

The Love of My Life

John Lennon *Rhythm and acoustic guitars, Hammond organ, harmonium, tape loops, sound effects, tambourine, handclaps, finger snaps, vocals*
Paul McCartney *Bass, acoustic and lead guitars, piano, clavichord, tape loops, sound effects, handclaps, finger snaps, vocals*
George Harrison *Lead, acoustic, rhythm and bass guitars, sitar, tambura, tape loops, sound effects, maracas, tambourine, handclaps, finger snaps, vocals*
Ringo Starr *Drums, tambourine, maracas, cowbell, shaker, handclaps, finger snaps; tape loops, lead vocals on Yellow Submarine*
George Martin *Piano (Good Day Sunshine) and (Tomorrow Never Knows), Hammond organ (Got To Get You Into My Life)*
Anil Bhagwat *Tabla (Love You To)*

REVOLVER

"LISTEN TO THE COLOUR OF YOUR DREAMS" SAYS JOHN LENNON ON *REVOLVER*'S PSYCHEDELIC LANDMARK *TOMORROW NEVER KNOWS*. THE BEATLES DID JUST THAT – AND THEY CREATED A MASTERPIECE. STEVE HARNELL TUNES IN

It may only have been a fleeting moment, but for a brief period, England's bustling capital was at the epicentre of the pop cultural universe. 'Swinging London' has since descended into the realms of newsreel montage cliché, but in 1966 the thrilling adventurousness and diversity of its creative forces in music, film, theatre and fashion was the envy of the entire world.

The climate was of experimentalism and freedom, throwing off the shackles of post-war austerity. From the rise of working class heroes such as Michael Caine, Terence Stamp and Sean Connery in the acting world, through the groundbreaking innovations of Mary Quant in the fashion industry and the emergence of Twiggy and Chrissie Shrimpton, all eyes were on London – and England even won the World Cup that summer.

The Beatles were the fulcrum of it all, of course, the biggest pop cultural phenomenon that has ever been. Although only St John's Wood-dwelling man-about-town Paul McCartney was a continual presence on the countercultural scene (John, George and Ringo had already decamped from the bright lights to the more sedate environs of the stockbroker belt), the band were still perfectly placed to fully embrace, and then spearhead, a radical new movement of artistic endeavour.

In April 1966, The Rolling Stones, driven by the vision of exotic multi-instrumentalist Brian Jones, had mirrored the 'Swinging London' ethos and ideology with *Aftermath*, but four months later *Revolver* captured the zeitgeist to an even greater degree.

Originally, manager Brian Epstein had envisaged that 1966 should follow a similar itinerary to the ▶

stereo
REVOLVER

TRACK BY TRACK

1 TAXMAN

George Harrison's opening track takes aim at the sky-scrapingly high levels of progressive tax taken by the Labour government of the time. The backing vocals' references to "Mr Wilson" and "Mr Heath", suggested by Lennon, refer respectively to Prime Minister Harold Wilson and Conservative Party leader Edward Heath.

2 ELEANOR RIGBY

One of McCartney's finest compositions, *Eleanor Rigby* is a powerfully melancholic study of loneliness. Not everyone was impressed, however. The Kinks' Ray Davies reviewed *Revolver* for *Disc And Music Echo* magazine and said of *Eleanor Rigby*: "I bought a Haydn LP the other day and this sounds just like it. It's all sort of quartet stuff and it sounds like they're out to please music teachers in primary schools."

3 I'M ONLY SLEEPING

Sleeping was very important to John Lennon. He once confessed that "sex is the only physical thing I can be bothered with anymore", while Maureen Cleave once wrote of him, "He can sleep almost indefinitely, [and] is probably the laziest person in England."

4 LOVE YOU TO

Harrison's second song on the album is a full-blooded Indian affair, with the guitarist following up on his work on *Norwegian Wood* with this sitar-drenched track reflecting on his relationship with Pattie Boyd. Noted music critic Lester Bangs wrote that *Love You To* represents "the first injection of ersatz Eastern wisdom into rock."

5 HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE

McCartney wrote this one after listening to The Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* album (which was itself inspired by Brian Wilson's exposure to *Rubber Soul*). Paul began writing the song at Lennon's house in Weybridge, in early June 1966, while waiting for his bandmate to wake up. "I sat out by the pool on one of the sun chairs with my guitar and started strumming in E," he recalled. "And soon [I] had a few chords, and I think by the time he'd woken up, I had pretty much written the song, so we took it indoors and finished it up."

6 YELLOW SUBMARINE

AKA 'The Ringo song'. Issued as a single, coupled with *Eleanor Rigby*, it went to No.1 on every major British chart and remained at the top for four weeks. In an interview in March 1967, McCartney and Lennon recalled that the song's melody was created by merging two different songs they'd been working on separately.

7 SHE SAID SHE SAID

The last track recorded for the album, it lacks any involvement from Paul McCartney, with Macca having walked out of the studio after a disagreement over the song's arrangement.

previous two years, with The Beatles making a third movie and an accompanying soundtrack album and undertaking extensive summer touring. But when the band vetoed the movie idea, an unprecedented three-month hole appeared in their schedule. It was an extraordinary luxury for a band who'd been forced to work at breakneck speed ever since their earliest days.

A typically perverse decision from the foursome was to shun their usual home at Abbey Road to record at Stax Studio in Memphis, the birthplace of seminal records by the likes of Otis Redding, Booker T & the

MGs and Sam And Dave. In-house producer Jim Stewart would have replaced George Martin, but the plan was eventually abandoned, and reported similar relocations to either New York's Atlantic Studios or Motown's hit factory in Detroit were also dismissed.

Reluctantly, the band reconvened at Abbey Road for their seventh studio album alongside George Martin. It was hardly the most auspicious of starts for what has arguably become their crowning achievement.

The difference between their previous album *Rubber Soul* and *Revolver* is, in essence, that between two very different thought processes. Even though it ▶

The Beatles' contract with EMI expired during the making of *Revolver*, meaning they weren't actually under contract while recording the album

8 GOOD DAY SUNSHINE

Recorded on 8 June 1966 (with overdubs added the following day), *Good Day Sunshine* is The Beatles at their ebullient best. Apparently, the song is a popular pick for the wake-up music on space missions (in November 2005, McCartney himself played it live to the crew of the International Space Station).

9 AND YOUR BIRD CAN SING

Lennon was never fond of this track, dismissing it as "another of my throwaways… fancy paper around an empty box". Still, English academic Toby Litt identified it as "the birth of all power-pop, from Big Star through Cheap Trick to Fountains Of Wayne". A must-hear version of the song, with the band cracking up while delivering the vocals, can be found on *Anthology 2*.

10 FOR NO ONE

McCartney recalls writing *For No One* in the bathroom of a ski resort in the Swiss Alps while on holiday with Jane Asher. The song, a baroque pop number about the last days of a relationship, remains one of Macca's most accomplished tracks, and a song that even the normally praise-shy Lennon called "a nice piece of work."

11 DOCTOR ROBERT

According to music theorist Walter Everett, the lyrics to *Doctor Robert* "contained the most overt drug references of any published Beatles song" up to 1966. As Paul recounted in the *Many Years From Now* book: "John and I thought it was a funny idea: the fantasy doctor who would fix you up by giving you drugs, [the song] was a parody on that idea. It's just a piss-take. As far as I know, neither of us ever went to a doctor for those kinds of things. But there was a fashion for it and there still is. Change your blood and have a vitamin shot and you'll feel better."

12 I WANT TO TELL YOU

Harrison had never managed three songs on a Beatles LP before, even though *I Want To Tell You* isn't up to the standard of its *Revolver* stablemates. He said of the track, "It's about the avalanche of thoughts that are so hard to write down or say or transmit."

13 GOT TO GET YOU INTO MY LIFE

The straights never noticed it, but *Got To Get You Into My Life* was actually Paul's ode to marijuana. "I'd been a rather straight working class lad," Macca reflected, "but when we started to get into pot it seemed to me to be quite uplifting."

14 TOMORROW NEVER KNOWS

Quite possibly the most musically radical Beatles song up until that point, *Tomorrow Never Knows* has been called "the most effective evocation of a LSD experience ever recorded", in critic Colin Larkin's description. As record producer Tony Visconti said later: "It was incredible how the music matched the lyrics and, previous to this album, nobody was writing like that."

stretches its legs sonically – in particular its use of the sitar on *Norwegian Wood – Rubber Soul* was still constructed under the restrictions that it had to be replicated live – or at least an approximation of it. With *Revolver,* all bets were off. The band were resolute that their touring days would soon be over (save for a few contractual obligations), so the only aim was to make each song the very best it could be in isolation.

Remarkably, although *Tomorrow Never Knows* seems like the perfect conclusion to *Revolver* and a gateway to the studio sophistication of *Pepper*, it was actually the first track to be recorded at sessions for the follow-up to *Rubber Soul*. After that came chamber music, soulful R&B, world music and a phantasmagorical children's tune so evocative that it inspired a whole animated universe. Is this a reflection of the band's collective ADHD, or the ebullient self-confidence in their own ability to write in any style they chose? Perhaps it's a final realisation that the stylistic stabilisers had been kicked to the kerb and they were now freewheeling into a limitless universe of musical possibilities. For the vast majority of bands, *Tomorrow Never Knows* would have been a sonic eureka moment of seismic proportions. But not The Beatles. For them, it was just another room in an endless corridor of possibilities.

> "*Taxman* was when I first realised that even though we had started earning money, we were actually giving most of it away in taxes; it was and still is typical. Why should this be so?"

NEW ERA

In the end, it's *Taxman* that ushers in the new era of The Beatles on record. The two count-ins that herald the song simultaneously look backwards and forwards: George Harrison character-acts the role of a miser totting up his pennies (this was dubbed onto the song a month after it was originally finished), while the vigorous "1-2-3-4!" in the background by Paul is a knowing nod to the exuberant count-in at the start of *I Saw Her Standing There*, the first song from their debut album, *Please Please Me*.

The Fab Four performing on BBC's *Top Of The Pops*, 1966

Taxman itself is a far more cynical affair and features George's bitter complaint at the 95p-in-the-pound tax rate for the UK's highest earners at the time. In his autobiography, *I, Me, Mine,* Harrison wrote: "*Taxman* was when I first realised that even though we had started earning money, we were actually giving most of it away in taxes; it was and still is typical. Why should this be so? Are we being punished for something we had forgotten to do?" Apart from George's cynicism, the star of the show is McCartney's pumping bassline. Paul also supplies the remarkable crazed guitar solo, too.

The ease at which the band pinball between styles without any drop-off in quality on the album is staggering. *Eleanor Rigby*, McCartney's bleak, Pinteresque tale of broken, futile lives is heartbreaking. With Paul the sole Beatle on the track, it was also a signpost to his future tendency to dispense with his colleagues and drop the band dynamic when the need arose. George Martin's wonderful orchestral arrangement was inspired by the film scores of French new wave director François Truffaut. The track is arguably McCartney's great accomplishment as a lyricist. There's a bravery to the bleakness of lines like "Father McKenzie, wiping the dirt from his hands as he walks from the grave/ No one was saved". The Samuel Beckett-level desolation must have come as a shock to pop fans the world over. And note that final line: Paul's apparent rejection of Christianity prefaces the eventual "bigger than Jesus" furore created by John that engulfed the band later in the year.

SONG ORIGIN

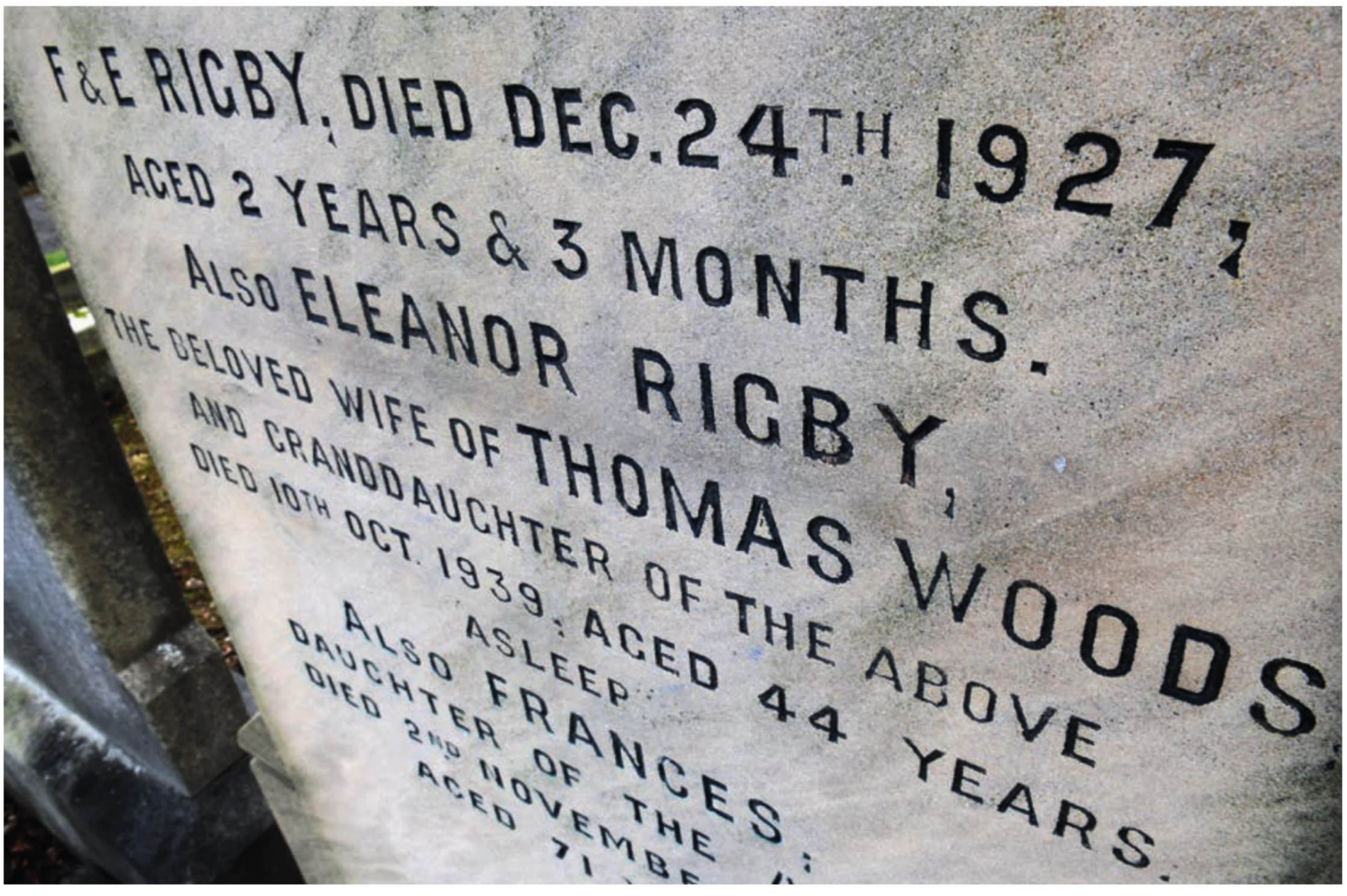
The story of the song's origin has been much debated over the years, with McCartney claiming that both the titular spinster and Father McKenzie were pure figments of his imagination. While wandering the streets of Bristol waiting for girlfriend Jane Asher to finish rehearsals for a play at the Bristol Old Vic, he stumbled across a King Street wine merchants, Rigby & Evens. His original heroine was called Daisy Hawkins, but after splicing in the first name of *Help!* co-star Eleanor Bron and part of the Bristol shop name, he came up with a new title.

In the *Anthology* book, Paul explains: "I thought, I swear, that I made up the name like that. I remember distinctly having the name Eleanor, looking for a believable surname and wandering around the docklands in Bristol and seeing the shop there. But it seems that up in Woolton Cemetery where I used to hang out a lot with John, there's a gravestone to an Eleanor Rigby. Apparently, a few yards to the right, there's someone called McKenzie. It was either complete coincidence or in my subconscious."

It's also said that Father McKenzie started life as Father McCartney until Lennon's friend Pete Shotton suggested it could be misinterpreted and came up with the new name while Paul worked on the song at John's Surrey house. Analysing *Eleanor Rigby* in his book *Revolution In The Head*, Ian MacDonald acutely adds: "Often misrepresented as purveyors of escapist fantasy, The Beatles were, at their best, more poignantly realistic than any other popular artists of their time."

Lennon's cynicism at fame shows through in his ode to lethargy, *I'm Only Sleeping*. This was something of a perennial songwriting theme of his; he returned to it on 'The White Album' track *I'm So Tired* and later in his solo career with *#9 Dream*. Harrison's Indian-style backwards guitar solo was constructed during a six-hour session, thus creating another song that was impossible to duplicate live.

Another landmark moment on the album is found ▶



The fabled Eleanor Rigby grave in Liverpool. "It was either complete coincidence or in my subconscious," said Paul

with Harrison's *Love You To*. Although George had already utilised a sitar on *Norwegian Wood*, *Love You To* was the first track specifically written with the instrument in mind. George played sitar, and hired Indian musician Anil Bhagwat to play tabla. The song was originally titled *Granny Smith*; Harrison often completed a song before finalising a name for it. His message here may have been one of universal love and peace, but there's still an element of cynicism that was often typical of his songwriting: "There's people standing round, who'll screw you in the ground/ They'll fill you in with all their sins you'll see".

If *Revolver* is regularly shot through with world-weary cynicism, then Paul McCartney often provides its lighter moments, including the beautifully melodic *Here, There And Everywhere* and *Good Day Sunshine*, the latter Macca's inspired attempt to channel the aural injection of Vitamin D that was The Lovin' Spoonful's 1966 No.2, *Daydream*. Meanwhile, Ringo's traditional one-song outing comes on track six, the wonderful children's classic *Yellow Submarine*.

The sheer audacity of writing a children's song and placing it slap-bang in the middle of a generation-defining artistic statement is quite remarkable. Among those providing sound effects in the studio were Beatle insiders Mal Evans and Neil Aspinall, Rolling Stone Brian Jones, and Marianne Faithfull – and that's the band's chauffeur Alf Bicknell rattling chains in the background, too. A 30-second introduction from Ringo was cut from the final recording, which saw the band spending more time on this one song than on the whole of their debut album.

In the *Anthology* book, Paul explains: "I thought that with Ringo being so good with children – a knockabout uncle type – it might not be a bad idea for him to have a children's song rather than a serious song. He wasn't that keen on singing."

NAUTICAL LANDSCAPE

As Lennon set about creating a suitably nautical soundscape to back the track, he came upon the idea of singing underwater. George Martin dissuaded him from the plan but engineer Geoff Emerick came up with an alternative: how about John sing into a microphone that was immersed in water? A microphone was duly wrapped in a condom and placed inside a milk carton. The signal was so weak, though, that this idea was scrapped. It was only years later that Emerick realised what folly it could have been and recalled: "I realised with horror that the microphone we were using was phantom-powered – meaning that it actually was a live electrical object. In conjunction with the 240-volt system used in England, any of us, including Lennon, could easily have been electrocuted, and I would have gone down in history as the first recording engineer to kill a client in the studio."

"I thought that with Ringo being so good with children – a knockabout uncle type – it might not be a bad idea for him to have a children's song rather than a serious song. He wasn't that keen on singing"

The Beatles at Chiswick House, London, making two films to promote *Paperback Writer* and *Rain* on 20 May 1966

The band's enthusiastic adoption (Paul excepted) of LSD is a major influence on *Revolver*. For *She Said She Said*, read *He Said He Said*. The subject in question is, in fact, the soon-to-be *Easy Rider* star and countercultural icon Peter Fonda. On 24 August 1965, The Beatles were taking a break from their tour of the United States and hanging out with the actor and various members of The Byrds. As a child, Fonda had almost died of a gunshot wound, and delighted in telling the gory tale to Harrison and Lennon while the assembled stars were tripping on acid.

Lennon commented: "I wrote [the song] about an acid trip I was on in Los Angeles. It was only the second trip we'd had. We took it because I started hearing things about it and we wanted to know what it was all about. Peter Fonda came over to us and started saying things like, 'I know what it's like to be dead, man', and we didn't wanna know, but he kept going on and on."

John and Paul signing autographs for fans as they arrive at Abbey Road, 22 June 1966

DRUG DOCTOR

Equally trip-related is Lennon's *Doctor Robert*. The identity of the man in question is yet another hotly-debated topic but it is thought to be Dr Robert Freymann, who ran a clinic in New York; he was notorious for giving his clients Vitamin B12 shots with a healthy dose of amphetamines. It's another exercise in Lennon's continual need to subvert the pop form and fill his lyrics with in-jokes for the turned-on countercultural insiders.

Likewise, the same goes for *Here Come The Nice* by The Small Faces.

Even though McCartney had refused to take LSD by the time he recorded *Revolver*, he still managed to sneak in the pro-marijuana, Motown-influenced *Got To Get You Into My Life* under the guise of a sweet love song. "I wrote it when I had first been introduced to pot – like someone else might write an ode to chocolate or a good claret," McCartney later explained. The song was a coded boast, too, as Paul later added: "We were kind of proud to have been introduced to pot by Dylan, that was rather a coup. It was like being introduced to meditation and given your mantra by the Maharishi. There was a certain status to it."

The band only finalised the album's title while on tour in Germany in late June. Among the contenders was *Abracadabra*, but this was ditched when they realised it had already been used. Also on the potentials list were *Magic Circles*, *Beatles On Safari*, *Four Sides Of The Eternal Triangle* and even, rather astonishingly, *Fat Man And Bobby*. At one point Ringo also attempted a groansome pun on The Rolling Stones' *Aftermath* when he suggested *After Geography*.

"I wrote *Got To Get You Into My Life* when I had first been introduced to pot – like someone else might write an ode to chocolate or a good claret"

REVOLVER RELEASED

Following years of tinkering with tracklistings, *Revolver* was the final example of a Beatles album having differing incarnations in the UK and US. Three Lennon compositions off the LP – *I'm Only Sleeping*, *And Your Bird Can Sing*

and *Doctor Robert* – were taken off the American pressing as they'd already featured on previous Capitol release *Yesterday And Today* just two months earlier.

When the album was unveiled in the United Sates, its release and concurrent live shows were at first marred by the controversy surrounding Lennon's notorious "bigger than Jesus" interview with Maureen Cleave that first appeared in the *Evening Standard* in March 1966. Although Lennon's statement attracted little attention in the UK, five months later it blew up into a row which very nearly threatened the band's existence in the US, where Beatle record-burning events became commonplace. Lennon had told Cleave: "Christianity will go. It will vanish and shrink. I needn't argue about that; I'm right and I'll be proved right. We're more popular than Jesus now; I don't know which will go first – rock'n'roll or Christianity. Jesus was all right but his disciples were thick and ordinary."

While at a press conference at the Astor Hotel before the 1966 US mini-tour, a clearly rattled Lennon semi-backtracked: "I'm not anti-Christ or anti-religion or anti-God. I'm not saying we're better or greater, or comparing us with Jesus Christ as a person, or God as a thing or whatever it is. I just said what I said and was wrong, or was taken wrong, and now it's all this."

Faced with this, the band adopted a siege mentality. The Abbey Road recording studio would become their bunker, and the extended recording sessions for *Revolver*'s follow-up would result in the most important album of all time. The military intervention of Sgt Pepper awaited. ●

Although there had been hints of the sitar on *Rubber Soul*, *Revolver* would fully embrace the Indian sound

Klaus Voorman was the designer of the striking *Revolver* record sleeve

KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

PAUL MCCARTNEY WON AN IVOR NOVELLO AWARD FOR HIS WORK ON MOVIE SOUNDTRACK *THE FAMILY WAY*, BUT IS IT ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF HOW GEORGE MARTIN'S CONTRIBUTIONS WERE UNDERVALUED? STEVE HARNELL LISTENS IN...

A school of thought among some Beatle fans argues that the cultured work of George Martin which adorns their records has been unduly overlooked in light of the accomplishments of his young charges – and the story behind *The Family Way* rather backs up that opinion.

Released on 6 January 1967 in the UK and six months later in the US, credited to Paul McCartney with production by George Martin, the album soundtracked a 1966 movie starring Hayley Mills and Hywel Bennett.

Yet it's Martin who is fundamental to this project, writing the arrangements for McCartney's often skeletal ideas, and he arguably deserves greater credit.

Listen to the soundtrack now at more than half a century's remove and it feels like a project that a Beatle would only have attempted between the dying embers of *Revolver* and the rosy, nostalgic glow for England's past that, in part, kindled the inspiration behind *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*.

By the end of 1966, The Beatles were already starting to splinter, enjoying time apart and exploring new spiritual and artistic avenues. George and Pattie Boyd had flown to Bombay for the guitarist to receive sitar lessons at the feet of Ravi Shankar and further indulge his interest in yoga.

Meanwhile, John Lennon had acted in Richard Lester's latest movie, the black comedy *How I Won The War* – based on a novel of the same name by Patrick Ryan – with Lennon as Private Gripweed (complete with military-length short hair much to the consternation of his fans).

In the meantime, Paul initially contacted the band's management company NEMS to flag up his desire to write a movie theme. However, *The Family Way* would require a full soundtrack, rather more than he originally envisaged. Luckily, George Martin was on hand for the ride for what would become the first time Paul had written for an official release outside of the Lennon-McCartney partnership.

Despite being under the impression Lennon wasn't bothered by the move, in later years McCartney learnt that the idea caused a few waves. Paul explained: "It seemed a good opportunity to get away from what I did normally. But Yoko told me [recently that] John was a little bit hurt, which is sad. We did actually talk about it, he just never told me at that time. He probably just covered up. With The Beatles, it was a bit like a marriage.

Hayley Mills as Jenny with future *Shelley* actor Hywel Bennett as Arthur

It was quite good to just get away and do something on my own. If I'd have known John was disturbed I would have just asked him to join me."

IT'S ONLY A NORTHERN SONG

McCartney and Martin began collaborating on the score in November 1966 with recording taking place within the space of a month. Paul's main contribution was in composing a brief piano instrumental, but it was Martin who then reworked this into multiple interpretations for the 26-minute album.

In a contemporaneous *Sunday Times* interview, Paul threw light on the collaborative process: "I play themes and chords on piano or guitar, [George] gets it down on paper. I talk about the idea I have for instrumentation, then he works out the arrangement."

Paul's love of traditional northern music would eventually see him produce the Black Dyke Mills Band's instrumental *Thingumybob* in the summer of 1968, but the bassist's first explorations into the genre would be heard in his suggestions for arrangements on *The Family Way*.

However, Paul's contributions to writing and recording sessions were hands-off to say the least. According to authors Howard Sounes and Steve Turner, McCartney had to be badgered into providing a second composition to score a key love scene in the movie. Sounes adds that George Martin had to "pester Paul for the briefest scrap of a tune" and to threaten to write it himself before the Beatle acquiesced and came up with *Love In The Open Air* at his St John's Wood home with the producer standing over him. McCartney had been enthusiastic about the project but blamed writer's block for his lack of material.

It was completed in just five sessions across three days at CTS Studios, London, utilising members of The George Martin Orchestra, with the final arrangements featured violins, viola, a brass band and church organ.

The Swinging London-meets-brass band old world vibe encompassed during *The Family Way* soundtrack's short running time is very of its era but remains an intriguing Beatle-related curio. Such was the haste in which it was compiled, the majority of tracks are labelled by their cue titles rather than individually named. The album sold poorly upon release and failed to chart on either side of the Atlantic but McCartney picked up an Ivor Novello award for Best Instrumental thanks to *Love In The Open Air*, no doubt irritating Martin whose more extensive work on the project was overlooked. ●

THE PLOT THICKENS

Directed by Roy Boulting, this comedy-drama about the marital difficulties of a young couple played by Hywel Bennett and Hayley Mills was slapped with an X-certificate on account of a scene showing the latter's naked posterior. Mills plays Jenny Piper, the wife of cinema projectionist Arthur Fitton (Bennett). John Mills plays the father of real-life daughter Hayley; his character Ezra often butting heads with the bookish Arthur. The newlywed couple's plans for a honeymoon in Majorca end when they discover their travel agent has absconded with their cash. They also have to remain living with Arthur's parents, putting further strain on their marriage. But there's a happy ending for the couple, their honeymoon money is returned and Ezra – who has by now built a better relationship with his new son-in-law – helps them out with a down-payment for a cottage.

THE FINAL TOUR

THE END OF THE ROAD

WHEN ORIGINAL PLANS TO MAKE ANOTHER FILM WERE DROPPED, THE BEATLES FILLED THE GAP IN THEIR DIARY WITH A WORLD TOUR. AFTER ALL, WHAT COULD GO WRONG? DOUGLAS MCPHERSON GOES ON THE ROAD

It wasn't billed as The Beatles' Last World Tour, but the Fab Four weren't very far into their 1966 trek from Britain to Germany, Japan, the Philippines and America when they decided they'd had enough of a bad experience they had no desire to repeat.

Although they were met with legions of screaming fans wherever they went, they were also embroiled in international diplomatic incidents in two countries, got on the wrong side of a dictator, and faced a storm of controversy and death threats in America's Deep South after John Lennon's unguarded remarks concerning religion were taken seriously out of context.

Although it wasn't officially part of the tour, The Beatles played what would turn out to be their last scheduled UK show at the *New Musical Express* Poll Winners Concert at the Empire Pool (now SSE Arena), Wembley, on 1 May 1966.

In the year that England won the World Cup and London was declared the swinging capital of the world, the bill was, in retrospect, one of the greatest line-ups of rock royalty ever assembled. Among the stars that played a short set in front of 10,000 fans were The Rolling Stones, The Who, The Yardbirds, Small Faces, The Walker Brothers, Herman's Hermits, Dusty Springfield, Roy Orbison, Cliff Richard and the Shadows and Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick & Tich.

LAST CHANCE

If anyone had known it would be their last chance to see The Beatles, it would have been an even more momentous occasion. As it was, however, there was tension backstage when Mick Jagger insisted that The Rolling Stones close the show instead of The Beatles. His argument was that, as The Stones were coming off three No.1 records in a row, they were the bigger act. John Lennon was having none of it, and accused Mick of being ungrateful for all the help the Liverpudlians had given the London band, including writing The Stones' hit *I Wanna Be Your Man*. Jagger went so far as to threaten not to play at all if the Stones couldn't close the show, but backed down ▶

The Beatles performing at their first concert on their tour of Germany at the Circus Krone-Bau in Munich

The Beatles accept their awards onstage at the *NME* Poll Winners Concert at Empire Pool, Wembley, on 1 May 1966

when *NME* proprietor Maurice Kinn said he'd be in breach of contract with ABC-TV, who were filming the event for television.

In the event, however, Lennon opted for The Beatles not to close the show, so that they could make their escape from the building without being besieged by fans. It was left to The Kinks to go on last.

More tragically from an historical perspective, another dispute between Beatles manager Brian Epstein and ABC was not resolved, and the TV cameras were turned off while both The Beatles and The Stones performed, the result being that the band's last proper show in Britain was lost to posterity. Those there were treated to a 15-minute set comprising *I Feel Fine*, *Nowhere Man*, *Day Tripper*, *If I Needed Someone* and *I'm Down*. The group was, however, filmed receiving their trophies (cups of a size to rival the one that Bobby Charlton would soon be holding aloft in the nearby football stadium) for Britain's Top Vocal Group and the World's Best Vocal Group, while Lennon was named Runner Up World Musical Personality and Britain's Top Vocal Personality. The awards were presented by square-jawed Western star Clint Walker from the TV series *Cheyenne*, and accepted without any kind of speech from the group, let alone any kind of hint that the thousands present had just seen The Beatles play the UK for the very last time.

The *NME* show was a one-off appearance during the making of the band's seventh album, *Revolver*, and the day after they completed the disc the group flew to Munich to begin the German leg of their world tour at the historic, 3,500-capacity Circus Krone building on 24 June.

Although they'd just completed one of their most musically ambitious albums, they didn't play any of the songs from it, such as *Eleanor Rigby*. One reason was that they never previewed unreleased material live. Another reason – and ultimately one of the reasons why their 1966 tour would be their last – was that the increasingly ambitious and sophisticated sounds that

ALTHOUGH THEY'D JUST COMPLETED ONE OF THEIR MOST MUSICALLY AMBITIOUS ALBUMS IN *REVOLVER*, THEY DIDN'T PLAY ANY OF THE SONGS FROM IT, SUCH AS *ELEANOR RIGBY*

they were creating in the studio had grown beyond what four men could recreate on stage with just three guitars and a drum kit.

Physically exhausted and creatively drained from their recent recording session, they took to the stage in smart green suits like the simple four-piece rock'n'roll band they had once been, plugged in their guitars without fuss, adjusted their amps and launched into the three-chord blast of Chuck Berry's *Rock'n'Roll Music*. With John and Paul harmonising like The Everly Brothers on *Baby's In Black*, the unpretentiously endearing set continued with songs like the twangy *I Feel Fine*, *Nowhere Man* and the foursome's irresistibly catchy current hit, *Paperback Writer*.

The lack of pretence – or lack of rehearsal – was evident when Lennon began playing over one of Harrison's solos and stood back with his hands behind his back when he realised his mistake, and when McCartney forgot the words to *I'm Down*. As the audience added a layer of screams to everything it was as if nothing had changed since the first wave of Beatlemania a couple of years before.

TROUBLED WATERS

Things had changed, however, as the group discovered when they returned to Hamburg for their first gigs there since their days at the Star-Club. Now they were playing the 5,600-seat Ernst-Merch-Halle. They travelled in luxury trains normally reserved for royalty and stayed in a former palace. Nostalgic sight-seeing trips to their old stomping grounds had to be confined to night to avoid being mobbed.

Some "old ghosts" surfaced, as Harrison described some former drinking buddies they ran into, but both the former friends and the band themselves were conscious of the division that fame and wealth had put between them. There was also an ugly undercurrent of violence that became evident on the tour as police began using heavy-handed tactics, and even tear gas, to subdue over-excited fans.

The band's flight to Japan was delayed by a typhoon and the group waited out the weather during a stopover in Alaska. A political storm, meanwhile, had been ▶

ACCORDING TO SOME REPORTS, THE BAND WEREN'T IMPRESSED BY THEIR OWN MUSICIANSHIP, WHICH PERHAPS BECAME ANOTHER FACTOR IN THEIR DECISION TO QUIT LIVE PERFORMANCE

brewing in Japan about whether The Beatles should be allowed to play there at all. At a transitional time in Japan's history, when the country was still re-establishing its sovereignty after allied occupation in the years after the Second World War, traditionalists feared the group's decadent western influence on the nation's youth. Even the Japanese prime minister, Eisaku Sato, was opposed to the visit until he was persuaded of the group's respectability by the fact that they had recently been made MBEs by the British sovereign.

Matters were complicated by the fact that the concerts were scheduled for the end of June, which is Japan's rainiest month. The only indoor venue large enough to host the shows was the Nippon Budokan, which had been built to house the judo events at the Tokyo Olympics two years before. Martial arts were revered in Japan and connected to the country's main religion, Shinto, and the hall had been built on the site of a plaza where Japanese soldiers had sworn allegiance to their emperor before the Second World War.

Although The Beatles' appearance paved the way for the Budokan to become a major rock venue, the idea of them playing there at the time was considered virtually sacrilegious. Threats from the extremist Greater Japanese Patriotic Party to "give the Beatles proper haircuts", plus the general fear of riotous behaviour by fans, resulted in an oppressive police and security presence and a jail-like monitoring and scheduling of the band's movements from hotel to stage.

The foursome spent their confinement in the Presidential Suite of the Tokyo Hilton, collaborating on a psychedelic painting that became known as Images Of A Woman. It was the only painting on which all four Beatles worked together. The head-clearing period of creativity prompted them to come up with a title for their just-recorded album, *Revolver*.

TAKING FLIGHT

The concerts went ahead without incident, although the band were disconcerted by the traditionally reserved nature of the Japanese audience. Performing for the first time without the accompaniment of deafening screams, the musicians could actually hear what they were playing. According to some reports, the band weren't impressed by their own musicianship, which perhaps became another factor in their decision to quit live performance.

From Japan, The Beatles headed for the Philippines, where they ran into more trouble. Their two concerts at the Rizal Memorial football stadium were witnessed by a combined audience of 80,000, which was the largest ever to see The Beatles in a single day. Unbeknownst to

A bewildered looking Lennon at Manila International Airport as the band are jostled by angry Philippines before their departure for home on 5 July

The four careering through their 11-song set before a packed audience at Essen's Grugahalle

the group, however, Epstein had turned down a request for them to appear at a party thrown by the country's First Lady, Imelda Marcos, the next day.

Stood up by the group, while the nation's TV cameras and press waited for The Beatles to make their appearance, Marcos was furious. Reportedly, she fumed that her children preferred The Stones anyway.

The Beatles, meanwhile, discovered what happens when you snub a dictator. In an unfunny version of a storyline that might have graced one of their films, they were more or less forced to flee the country. While the morning's newspapers condemned them, staff assistance at their hotel was withdrawn, as was a police escort to the airport, where even the escalators were turned off, forcing the band and their entourage to haul their luggage and equipment up the stairs.

In the terminal they were physically beaten up by the regime's thugs and when they finally boarded their plane they were hit by a "departure tax" that not uncoincidentally equalled their fee for the Manila gig.

Even the peace-loving George Harrison was sufficiently bruised by the experience to say that the only reason they'd ever go back to the Philippines would be "to drop a bomb on the country".

COOL RECEPTION

If The Beatles were counting on a warmer reception in America they'd reckoned without the backlash against the infamous quote Lennon had given back in March. When US teen magazine *Datebook* reproduced the interview just before the band arrived in America, the "we're more popular than Jesus" part was seized upon, particularly in the 'Bible Belt' of the southern states, by preachers, disc jockeys, the Ku Klux Klan and pretty much anybody who already disliked The Beatles and all that they stood for.

The outcry, including radio boycotts and death threats, was so intense that Epstein considered cancelling the entire tour, or at least the dates in places like Memphis and St Louis where the reaction was most extreme. ▶

Instead, he called a press conference ahead of the first show in Chicago where Lennon apologised for "the mess that he had made". He explained that he was merely commenting on dwindling church attendance, that he was "not anti-God, anti-Christ or anti-religion", and that he'd forgotten that, because of his high profile as a Beatle, his words would resonate in ways another person's wouldn't.

Harrison, the most spiritual of the Beatles, backed Lennon by saying, "I agree with what John said. That doesn't mean I'm against religion. He was making a serious point, but his remarks were taken out of context." The haters were unappeased, however, and when a firework was thrown on stage in Memphis concert on 19 August, the group's press officer Tony Barrow recalled that everyone on stage and in the wings immediately looked at Lennon, fearing that he'd been shot.

Questions about the quote continued to haunt the band at press conferences throughout the American tour, while other stresses piled up during the trek which saw them playing shows almost every day, with hundreds of miles between venues.

In Cincinnati, their scheduled show at Crosley Field was rained off amid fears of electrocution. Although ▶

A guard protects The Beatles as they perform at an afternoon concert in Memphis, Tennessee

The Fabs play the International Amphitheater, Chicago, Illinois, to a sold-out crowd, 12 August 1966

”

WHEN A FIREWORK WAS THROWN ON STAGE IN MEMPHIS, THE GROUP'S PRESS OFFICER RECALLED THAT EVERYONE ON STAGE IMMEDIATELY LOOKED AT LENNON, FEARING THAT HE'D BEEN SHOT

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the support acts played that evening, The Beatles' portion was postponed until midday the next day, when they played without an opening act, before flying to St Louis for their evening concert.

In St Louis it rained heavily once again, and the band played beneath a makeshift corrugated iron shelter. "It felt like the worst little gig we'd ever played, even before we'd started as a band," McCartney recalled. "We were having to worry about the rain getting in the amps and it took us right back to the Cavern days – it was worse than those early days. And I don't even think the house was full."

It was, in fact, the gig where McCartney finally agreed with Lennon and Harrison that it was time to put their touring days behind them, even though they vowed not to announce their decision until they'd honoured the remaining four American dates.

SWANSONG

If anyone had known that the world's biggest pop band would play its final concert on a cold, foggy night at Candlestick Park baseball stadium in San Francisco, on 29 August 1966, the show's promoters would probably have sold more than 25,000 tickets to a venue that could hold more than 42,000 people. The group themselves knew, though. "There was a big talk at Candlestick Park that this had got to end," Ringo reflected in the *Anthology* book. "John wanted to give up more than the others. He said that he'd had enough. I never felt 100 per cent certain until we got back to London."

Knowing it would be their final show, McCartney asked the band's press officer Tony Barrow to record the show on a hand-held cassette player out in the field. Unfortunately, he forgot to turn the tape over and missed the end of the very last song the foursome played, a cover of Little Richard's *Long Tall Sally*.

The band also thought to record the occasion photographically. "Before one of the last numbers, we set up this camera," Harrison remembered. "We set it up on the amplifier and Ringo came off the drums, and we stood with our backs to the audience and posed for a photograph, because we knew that was the last show."

It wasn't quite The Beatles' last gig. On 30 January 1969, they made their swansong with an unannounced performance on the roof of their five-storey Apple Corps office building in London's Savile Row, delighting and surprising people on their lunch break in the streets below until the police asked them to turn the volume down.

Candlestick Park was, however, The Beatles' last concert before a paying audience and although no one present realised at the time that they'd witnessed the end of an era, anyone who retained their ticket stub as a souvenir would have seen its value rise considerably in years to come above the $4.50 or $6.50 that they paid for it.

In an interesting historical footnote, Paul McCartney returned to Candlestick Park 48 years later on 14 August 2014 for the 50th concert of his Out There tour. McCartney was the last act ever to play the venue before it was demolished. In front of nearly twice as many people than had witnessed The Beatles' last stand nearly half a century before, he included several Beatles classics in his set and joked with the crowd that the last time he was there, "We got so pissed off we never did it again!" ●

Policemen clear the field of enthusiastic fans as The Beatles perform on a bandstand in Candlestick Park

CANDLESTICK PARK WAS
THE BEATLES' LAST CONCERT
BEFORE A PAYING AUDIENCE
AND, ALTHOUGH NO ONE
PRESENT REALISED AT THE
TIME, THEY'D WITNESSED
THE END OF AN ERA

A COLLECTION OF BEATLES OLDIES

THE BEATLES' FIRST GREATEST HITS COMPILATION, AS NEIL CROSSLEY RECALLS, WAS A STOP-GAP SOLUTION TO MEET EMI'S INSATIABLE DEMAND FOR NEW PRODUCT

Faced with the prospect of no new Beatles songs for the Christmas market in 1966, EMI decided to release its first greatest hits compilation. The Beatles themselves had no involvement in the project and, according to their press officer at the time, Tony Barrow, they were opposed to the album. It was left to the label, band manager Brian Epstein and producer George Martin to create a release worthy of the Fab Four. The album contained eight tracks that had been released on albums and seven singles that would be released on an LP for the very first time. There was only one previously unreleased song, a cover of Larry Williams' composition *Bad Boy*, included solely to give British fans a reason to buy the album.

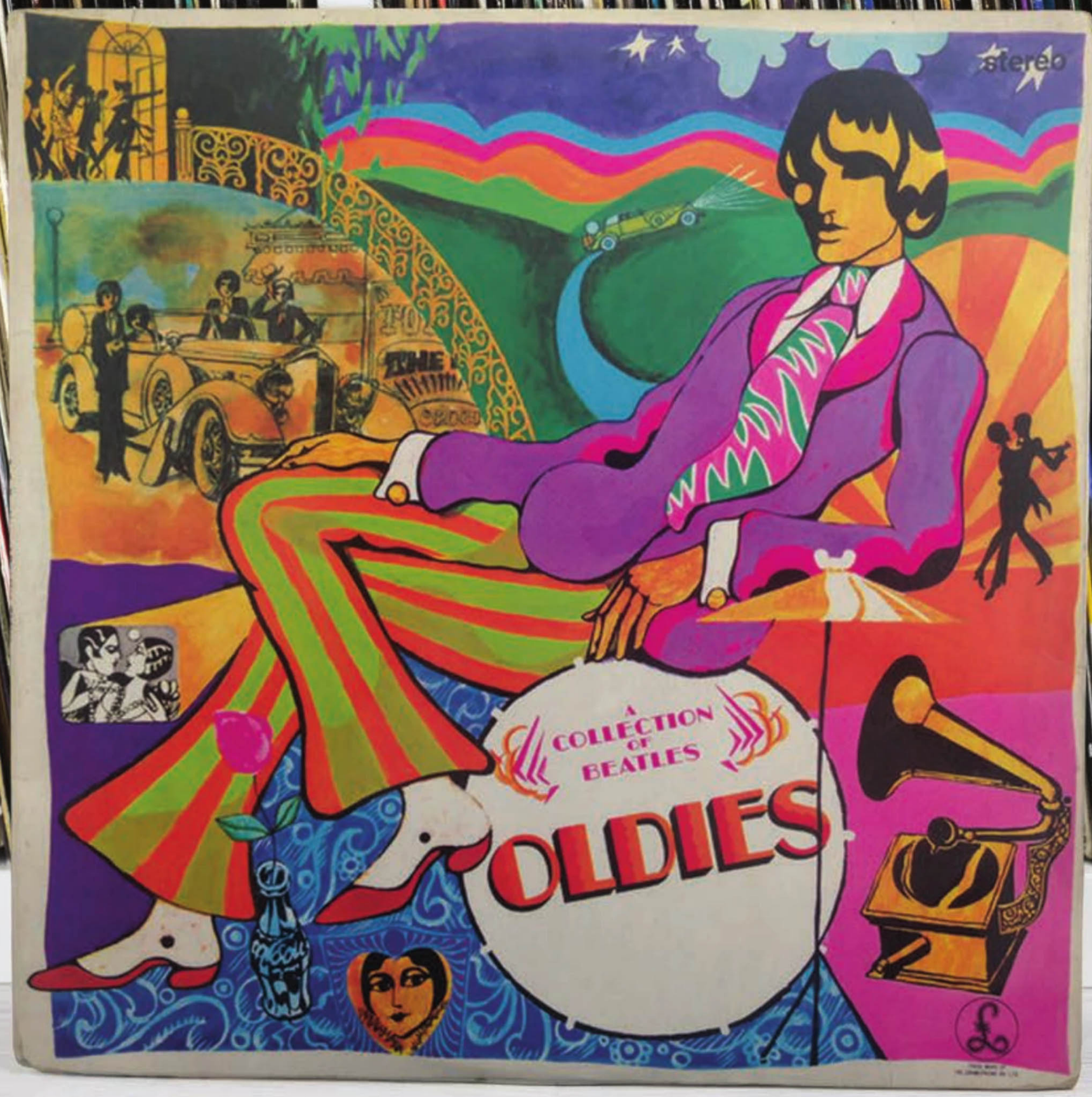
The LP's preparation and release coincided with rumours that the band were splitting up, which were fuelled by their individual solo projects and their retirement from live performance. *A Collection Of Beatles Oldies* was the band's first official greatest hits compilation and their eighth official album release in the UK.

RUSH RELEASE

A Collection Of Beatles Oldies was hurriedly prepared for the Christmas market. The LP was issued in both mono and stereo formats, but since some of the songs had never been mixed for stereo – principally Beatles singles, which were released in mono until 1969 – a series of remix sessions was set up. None were attended by as much as a solitary Beatle.

Some of the tracks, such as *I Want To Hold Your Hand*, *Day Tripper*, *We Can Work It Out* and *She Loves You*, had only been available in mono so were remixed in stereo, a task overseen by George Martin. Sessions took place from 31 October 1966 to 10 November 1966 in Studio One at EMI's Abbey Road Studios and from the outset, Martin was surprised how much time it took to create the stereo mixes.

She Loves You and *I Want to Hold Your Hand* proved to be particularly time-consuming, according to writer Kenneth Womack in his 2018 book *Sound Pictures:*



***A Collection Of Beatles Oldies* was the first Beatles album to fail to reach No.1**

The Life Of Beatles Producer George Martin, The Later Years, 1966–2016, the second volume of his biography of the producer. Martin allegedly discovered that the 1963 two-track recording tape of *She Loves You* had since been reused, forcing EMI engineer Geoff Emerick to return to the mono master and create a 'mock stereo' mix. This was achieved through removing the high frequencies from the left channel and the low frequencies from the right.

They had also intended to remix *From Me To You*, although as Mark Lewisohn notes in his 1988 book *The Complete Beatles Recordings*, this did not take place. Lewisohn states that the song appears on the stereo album as "simply the original two-track tape, rhythm on the left channel, vocals on the right". The harmonica edit piece on the intro was overlooked, and can only be found on the mono single.

COMPARATIVE FAILURE

A Collection Of Beatles Oldies was released as Parlophone PMC 7016 (mono) and PCS 7016 (stereo) on 10 December 1966. It peaked at No.7 and spent 34 weeks in the UK Album Charts, compared to every preceding album by The Beatles, which had reached No.1. The album was released in other European countries and in Australia in 1968. In 1987, it was deleted from the Beatles catalogue following the reissue of their albums on compact disc.

For EMI, the comparative failure of the album was a colossal disappointment. In her overview of album chart history for 1967, published in 2007, Official Charts Company researcher Sharon Mawer wrote that EMI had been expecting to achieve the "biggest album" of the year with *A Collection Of Beatles Oldies*. Instead, she wrote, it proved to be "one of the biggest miscalculations of the pop charts". Mawer concluded that fans were simply unwilling to pay for an album that, aside from *Bad Boy*, repackaged recordings that they already owned. As she put it: "The era of the successful greatest hits compilation was not yet with us". ●

RETRO CHIC

Psychedelic imagery and the retro Edwardian chic of boutiques such as I Was Lord Kitchener's Valet were among the inspirations for the cover, created by artist David Christian. According to a report in the 3 December 1966 issue of *Billboard* magazine, the painting was a "colourful Op-Art" work that had been commissioned by Brian Epstein. The main focus is a reclining man festooned in all the vivid, rakish Day-Glo finery of the times. From the moustaches to the vivid kipper ties, the image reflected The Beatles' own evolving image at the time.

The photograph of The Beatles on the back of the sleeve was taken at the Tokyo Hilton, where the band members were confined for much of their 1966 concert tour of Japan, due to security concerns. The shot allegedly served as inspiration for the photograph used on Oasis' debut album, *Definitely Maybe*, taken by Michael Spencer Jones.

The release of *A Collection Of Beatles Oldies* evoked some cynical responses from journalists. Reflecting on the release in the 70s, *NME* journalists Roy Carr and Tony Tyler said of the compilation: "Once again, it was Christmas – and The Beatles had no new product to give to EMI for their Santa sack! As a last resort, a predictable collection of oldies was hastily assembled and crammed into an inferior Carnaby Street-style carrier-bag sleeve".

John Lennon *Rhythm, acoustic and lead guitars, Hammond organ and final piano E chord, harmonica, tape loops, sound effects, handclaps, tambourine and maracas, vocals*
Paul McCartney *Bass and lead guitars, piano, Lowrey and Hammond organs, handclaps, vocalisations, tape loops, sound effects, comb and paper, vocals*
George Harrison *Lead, rhythm and acoustic guitars, sitar, tamboura, harmonica and kazoo. handclaps and maracas, vocals*
Ringo Starr *Drums, congas, tambourine, maracas, congas, handclaps and tubular bells, harmonica, final piano E chord, vocals*
George Martin *Tape loops and sound effects; harpsichord, harmonium, Lowrey organ and glockenspiel, Hammond organ, piano*

SGT PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND

THE BEATLES' MOST FAMOUS ALBUM HAS ONLY GROWN IN STATURE OVER THE LAST 50 YEARS AND MARKS THE MOMENT IN MUSICAL HISTORY WHERE POP WAS AFFORDED EQUAL RIGHTS WITH HIGH ART. STEVE HARNELL DOFFS HIS CAP

Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band occupies a singular place in The Beatles canon – it's both their most important album and their most misunderstood. In terms of its significance, there can be no more game-changing long-player in the history of recorded music than the band's 1967 opus. It marked the moment where pop music broke the cultural glass ceiling and could be considered high art. However, its reputation as rock's finest 'concept' album has always been a misnomer. Under examination, the Sgt Pepper 'fake band' conceit unravels after its second song and only makes a cursory reappearance on the penultimate track. So much for joined-up thinking, then.

Like *Revolver*, the diversity of musical styles and tonalities – from Lennon's acerbic bitterness and psychedelic imagination to McCartney's whimsy and Harrison's mysticism – is really what lies at the heart of *Sgt Pepper's* long-term appeal. It's also George Martin's finest achievement as a producer.

You could argue that the band made more consistent albums (step forward, *Revolver*) and created more diverse collections (no doubt, the astonishingly generous pick'n'mix *smörgåsbord* of 'The White Album') but there's something about the ▶

SGT. PEPPERS
LONELY HEARTS
CLUB BAND
THE BEATLES
WELCOME
THE
ROLLING
STONES

TRACK BY TRACK

1 SGT PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND

Recorded on 1 February 1967, this rocking McCartney number opens the album in fine form. The crowd noise on the track comes from a 1961 recording of satirical sketch show *Beyond The Fringe*, while the sounds of the orchestra tuning up were taken from the overdub session for *A Day In The Life*.

2 WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS

Lennon and McCartney wrote this one specifically for Ringo. The original opening lines read as, "What would you think if I sang out of tune? Would you throw ripe tomatoes at me?", which Ringo insisted on changing, believing it was an invitation for fans to pelt fruit at him. The band finished recording the song the night they shot the album's cover.

3 LUCY IN THE SKY WITH DIAMONDS

Despite suspicion that the title of *Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds* was a coded reference to LSD, Lennon always insisted that it was derived from a drawing by his four-year-old son Julian. Reflected Lennon's then-wife Cynthia: "I remember [Julian] coming home from school with it and showing it to his dad, who was sitting down. At the time he didn't say, 'Oh my God! What a great title for a song,' but it obviously stuck."

4 GETTING BETTER

With lyrics co-penned by Lennon and McCartney (Macca wrote the music alone), the idea for *Getting Better* came from a favourite phrase of Jimmie Nicol, The Beatles' stand-in drummer for eight days of their 1964 world tour.

5 FIXING A HOLE

The making of *Fixing A Hole* marked the first time The Beatles had recorded in a studio other than one owned and operated by their record label EMI. They returned from Regent Sound Studio in Tottenham Court Road to Abbey Road the next day to record *A Day In The Life*.

6 SHE'S LEAVING HOME

Although a bona fide Lennon-McCartney songwriting collaboration (Macca wrote and sang the verse while Lennon penned the chorus), the recording is missing any input from Harrison or Starr.

7 BEING FOR THE BENEFIT OF MR KITE!

The first seven takes of this one were recorded on 17 February 1967, the day *Strawberry Fields Forever/Penny Lane* was released in the UK. In 1998, Billy Connolly recorded a spoken-word recording of the song for the George Martin compilation *In My Life*.

"I thought it would be nice to lose our identities, to submerge ourselves in the persona of a fake group. We could make up all the culture around it and collect all our heroes in one place"

whole package of *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* – its clutch of now-classic tunes, the psychedelic, era-defining front cover, the much-vaunted audio trickery within – that holds a special place in many Fab Four fans' hearts.

All was not idyllic within the ranks of Beatledom, though. Itchy feet had set in as they reacted against the pressure of being part of the world's biggest band. Harrison even threatened to leave until his anger was appeased by Brian Epstein's promise that their touring days were over. Lennon took time out to hook up with *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help!* director Richard Lester, playing the part of Musketeer Gripweed in *How I Won The War*. McCartney explored his growing fascination with brass band music by providing the soundtrack to 1966 movie *The Family Way*, but he had bigger plans in mind for his future.

John Lennon bought this Romany caravan for his son Julian's fourth birthday, in 1967

The genesis of *Sgt Pepper* marks a key moment in Beatle history where McCartney asserted himself as the main motivational force within the band. Meanwhile, manager Brian Epstein, who was battling depression and an addiction to pills, was by this point proving to be far from the dynamic force of old. Distracted by his troubles, his role was becoming more reactive than proactive.

SGT MCCARTNEY

The bassist wrote the lion's share of the material on the album and came up with an idea for a song which would eventually become *Sgt Pepper*'s seemingly unifying concept while on a return flight to London from Kenya with tour manager Mal Evans. With a view to freeing up The Beatles stylistically, McCartney posited the concept of creating a fictional Edwardian-era military band. Evans, for his part, riffing off the *au courant* West Coast psychedelic band names of the times, reportedly came up with the title *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. McCartney later explained: "I thought it would be nice to lose our identities, to submerge ourselves in the persona of a fake group. We could make up all the culture around it and collect all our heroes in one place."

At first, the idea formed just the seed for the rocking opening song from the album. It was only three months into recording sessions that McCartney suggested that the 'Sgt Pepper' concept could be used as an overarching framing device.

George Martin recalled: "*Sgt Pepper* itself didn't appear until halfway through making the album. It was Paul's song, just an ordinary rock number. But when we finished it, Paul said, 'Why don't we make a whole album as though the Pepper band really existed, as though Sgt Pepper was making the record?' I loved the idea and from that moment on it was as though Pepper had a life of its own."

BEACH SOUNDS

The Beach Boys' seminal *Pet Sounds* was a regular touchstone throughout the recording process and a continual reminder of how a studio could become an instrument in itself. McCartney has recognised the influence of *Freak Out!* by The Mothers Of Invention, now often seen as rock's first fully-fledged concept album (in a perfect example of pop eating itself, Frank Zappa's band went on to satirise *Sgt Pepper* with their 1968 album *We're Only In It For The Money*, which parodied the famous cover art. Upon their record company's insistence, however, Zappa's artful reference was removed from the front of the album and placed inside the gatefold).

With The Beatles afforded the luxury of limitless studio time, they originally began recording sessions for what became *Sgt Pepper* with the idea of creating a themed work around their childhoods in Liverpool. Early fruit yielded from those sessions were *Strawberry Fields Forever*, *When I'm Sixty-Four* and *Penny Lane*. With the band taking an unheard-of amount of time between the delivery of albums – an unrelenting record-buying public had been led to expect most acts to release two LPs a year – Epstein was eventually pressured into giving up *Strawberry Fields Forever* and *Penny Lane* for a double A-sided single in February 1967. Remarkably, what is almost universally considered the greatest 7" record of all time only made it to No.2 in the UK singles chart. Engelbert Humperdinck's *Please Release Me* pipped it to the summit, breaking The Beatles' four-year run of chart-topping singles in the UK.

The two sides of the single were omitted from the eventual tracklisting of the album, a decision which George Martin has described as the biggest mistake of his professional life. The whole affair left a sour taste in the mouth, for not only did the single fail to make it to No.1 but the two songs' absence also stymied the entire 'Liverpool childhood' concept.

With Paul asserting his dominance over the direction and workload of the band, resentment began to increase among his colleagues. Always ▶

Paul McCartney during the recording of *A Day In The Life* at Abbey Road Studios on 10 February 1967

the first to arrive at recording sessions with an armful of new compositions, McCartney's proliferant talent forced Lennon's hand. John's inherent sense of competition with Paul generally allowed him to keep pace, but there was a sense that he was being pressurised into writing songs to order rather than being left to wait for the muse to strike. Meanwhile, Harrison was sensing that the new working methods of endless overdubs and assembling songs piecemeal was ruining their traditional band dynamic.

With so much dead time in-between takes, Ringo was a passive bystander for much of the recording. "The biggest memory I have of *Sgt Pepper* is that I learned to play chess," he added drily. From the album's opening moments presenting an orchestra tuning up, The Beatles tap into an interesting dualism: they are at once embracing the elder order and thumbing their nose at the establishment. This is an album in the form of an event – unapologetic in its scale, wilfully indulgent and very knowing. George Martin's adept sprinkling of sound effects – refined during his years working with The Goons and many more comedy acts of the day – is a continual feature of *Sgt Pepper*. The audience noise at the album's beginning was a combination of a recording of the *Beyond The Fringe* stage show plus takes from the

From the album's opening moments presenting an orchestra tuning up, The Beatles tap into an interesting dualism: they are at once embracing the elder order and thumbing their nose at the establishment

orchestral session that gave birth to *A Day In The Life*. The *Sgt Pepper* theme itself is a deft mix of overture, music hall atmospherics and heavy rock. Paul McCartney had witnessed iconic guitar hero Jimi Hendrix in full flight just two nights before recording the track at Brian Epstein's Saville Theatre. Paul's rocking solo, as with his stunning contribution to *Taxman* the previous year, showcased his under-rated chops as a lead guitar player.

Ringo's appearance as 'Billy Shears' on *With A Little Help From My Friends* finds him at the edge of his limited vocal range for an anthem of collective unity that's a neat summation of the hopes of the ▶

8 WITHIN YOU WITHOUT YOU

Written by Harrison, *Within You Without You* (his only track on the album) was the guitarist's second Indian-styled composition, after *Love You To* off *Revolver*, and was inspired by his stay in India in late 1966 with his mentor, Ravi Shankar. He wrote the song in early 1967 while at the house of *Revolver* cover artist – and old-time Hamburg mate – Klaus Voormann.

9 WHEN I'M SIXTY-FOUR

Despite its theme of ageing, *When I'm Sixty-Four* dates back to The Beatles' earliest days, with McCartney having composed it on the family piano at 20 Forthlin Road "when I was about 15". "Back then I wasn't necessarily looking to be a rock'n'roller," he reflected. "When I wrote [it] I thought I was writing a song for Sinatra." Despite Lennon's dislike of the track (he once said, "I would never even dream of writing a song like that"), his son Julian recorded his own version of in 2002.

10 LOVELY RITA

Inspired by a story he'd read in an American newspaper about a newly-retired traffic warden, McCartney was taken with the expression 'meter-maid', a colloquialism unique to the US. "The phrase 'meter maid' was so American that it appealed," he said later. Engineer Geoff Emerick later revealed that McCartney's distinctive vocal arrangement was inspired by Brian Wilson's work for The Beach Boys.

11 GOOD MORNING GOOD MORNING

Lennon was often self-deprecating about his songs, but his dissing of this one was more savage than most. "It's a throwaway, a piece of garbage," he raged. It was inspired from a jingle in a TV advert for Kellogg's that went, "Good morning, good morning/ The best to you each morning/ Sunshine breakfast, Kellogg's Corn Flakes/ Crisp and full of fun."

12 SGT PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND (REPRISE)

A simple reprise of the opening track, only at a faster tempo and with heavier instrumentation.

13 A DAY IN THE LIFE

A genuine Lennon-McCartney composition, the bulk of the song was written by Lennon, apart from the "Woke up, fell out of bed, dragged a comb across my head" middle-eight section, which was penned by McCartney. "It was another song altogether but it happened to fit," he said. "It was just me remembering what it was like to run up the road to catch a bus to school, having a smoke and going into class. It was a reflection of my schooldays. I would have a Woodbine, somebody would speak and I'd go into a dream." A *Rolling Stone* poll in 2010 deemed it The Beatles' Greatest Song.

emerging counter-culture community and a striking example of McCartney's supremely agile bass playing. It was originally titled *Bad Finger Boogie*; The Beatles later played a key part in the eventual rise of Apple Records signees Badfinger, choosing their name, with Paul writing the Top Five hit *Come And Get It* for them.

PSYCHEDELIC TREASURE

Lennon's first major contribution, *Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds*, has become a psychedelic treasure, but among the plaudits for its groundbreaking use of surrealism, the pleasing counterpoint of laid-back verses and stomping chorus is often missed. Inspired by a pastel drawing by his four-year-old son Julian, Lennon also drew from Lewis Carroll's *Through The Looking-Glass* for the dreamlike quality of the song. For once, the drug connotations – it was banned by the BBC as being pro-LSD – were entirely unintentional.

From the psychedelic transportation of *Lucy*, we're snapped back into focus by the upbeat jangle of *Getting Better*, a perfect blend of McCartney and Lennon's yin and yang songwriting (Lennon's contribution of "It can't get much worse" in the countermelody still raises a wry smile). Also provided by Lennon was the song's darkest lyrical refrain: "I used to be cruel to my woman/ I beat her and kept her apart from the things that she loved", which still feels odd coming from the lips of the cherubic McCartney.

Accusations of drug references seem to have affixed themselves to Beatles tracks at every turn during their psychedelic pomp. Even McCartney's apparently innocent *Fixing A Hole* was deemed to promote heroin. With critics reaching for ever-more ridiculous links, they may have overlooked the fact this was more likely Paul's take on recent repairs to his Scottish farmhouse mixed with reflections on the state of his songwriting muse.

One of the album's weaker tracks, *Fixing A Hole* is blown out of the water by the heartbreaking *She's Leaving Home* that follows. Every bit as good as the finely-observed narrative behind *Revolver*'s similarly orchestrated *Eleanor Rigby*, the song was an incisive kitchen sink drama that found The Beatles expertly straddling the generation gap between disaffected youth and disappointed parenthood. Sheila Bromberg's harp intro is wonderfully nuanced, and orchestral arranger Mike Leander's occasional use of Indian motifs within a traditional Western string arrangement is absolutely inspired.

She's Leaving Home was an incisive kitchen sink drama that found The Beatles expertly straddling the generation gap between disaffected youth and disappointed parenthood

Those attracted by *Sgt Pepper*'s studio innovations will no doubt gravitate towards the swirling cut-and-paste psychedelia of *Being For The Benefit Of Mr Kite!* and the hallucinatory nature of George Martin's and Geoff Emerick's fairground interludes. With Lennon frantically trying to keep pace with Paul's output, expediency was the order of the ▶

SGT PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND

The Beatles recording *Sgt Pepper* at Abbey Road Studios

The Beatles show off their gatefold sleeve for *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*

day, with the lyrics barely changed from the text of an 1843 poster for Pablo Fanque's circus in Rochdale bought in a Kent antique shop while on location filming the promo film for *Strawberry Fields Forever*. With Lennon setting Martin and Emerick the task of creating a fairground atmosphere where the listener could "smell the sawdust", the pair assembled a sound collage splicing together loops of harmoniums, steam organs, harmonicas and calliopes.

FROM INSIDE TO OUTSIDE

Side Two opens with George's only songwriting contribution to *Sgt Pepper*, the mid-tempo raga *Within You, Without You*. Along with *Love You To* and *The Inner Light* it marks his fascination with Indian classical music and underlines the forward-thinking nature of this LP at its best. Recorded with uncredited musicians from the Asian Music Centre, Harrison is the only Beatle on the song and, like *Taxman*, it shows his tendency for sanctimonious finger-wagging.

For *When I'm Sixty-Four*, McCartney is seemingly occupying the same headspace as when he soundtracked *The Family Way* the previous winter. McCartney had kept the melody in his songwriting locker since the very early days of the band's life; he played it as an instrumental on occasions at club gigs when the PA gave up the ghost and finally wrote the lyrics when his father turned 64 in July 1966.

This section of the album is *Sgt Pepper*'s least convincing. It's difficult to conclude that *Lovely Rita* figures among the band's best work. McCartney's winning way with a melody once again gets him over the line and he pulls something out of the fire with the surprisingly psychedelic coda, but could this be *Sgt Pepper*'s weak link? Lennon certainly thought so, pointing out: "These stories about boring people doing boring things – being postmen and secretaries and writing home. I'm not interested in third-party songs. I like to write about me, 'cos I know me."

Lennon is not above criticism himself, though. Once again looking for a

For *When I'm Sixty-Four*, Paul McCartney is seemingly occupying the same headspace as when he soundtracked *The Family Way* the previous winter

American pop artist Jann Haworth with two of her soft sculptures: the 'Old Lady' figure on the right features on the cover of *Sgt Pepper*, co-designed by her and husband Peter Blake

quick hit of inspiration, *Good Morning Good Morning* came from the kind of mundane starting point he would have hammered McCartney for using – the jingle of a Kellogg's Corn Flakes advert. Perhaps he knew it, too, and ultimately dismissed it as "throwaway, a piece of garbage".

In its favour, it does inject the back end of the album with a much-needed shot of adrenaline, with McCartney and Harrison both competing against each other on lead guitar. And if any proof was needed that The Beatles' eye (or ear) for detail was fully focused at the sessions then consider the fact that even the sound effects colouring the end of the song were ordered so that each successive animal heard was large enough to eat the previous one.

After the blink-and-you-miss-it *Sgt Pepper* band reprise to provide some form and shape to the preceding 11 songs, comes what is possibly the greatest pop song ever committed to tape

ALBUM APEX

After the blink-and-you-miss-it *Sgt Pepper* band reprise to provide some form and shape to the preceding 11 songs, comes what is possibly the greatest pop song ever committed to tape – if you could call the epochal *A Day In The Life* 'pop'. It took an unprecedented 34 hours of studio time to perfect the track, and not a moment was wasted. Recording began on the song just two days after the band finished *Penny Lane*. It became so important to the impact of *Sgt Pepper* that it sits outside the framing structure of the fictional band, but when work first began on it, few realised just what they had on their hands.

As with *...Mr Kite*, there's a reportage element to Lennon's lyric with allusions to newspaper articles about the suicide of a young millionaire friend of theirs, Tara Browne, that appeared in the pages of the *Daily Mail* and another story about a Lancashire potholes survey – the perfect contrast of the significant and mundane. Browne was a London scenester who drove his Lotus Elan at high speed through red lights in South Kensington, hitting a parked van and killing himself. It's not known if he was under the influence of LSD at the time of the crash, but it's thought John wrote the lyrics with that in mind. Lennon's narrator is oddly changeable in tone throughout the piece, particularly in the Browne section: "And though the news was rather sad/ Well I just had to laugh".

So what is the message of one of the most analysed five minutes in music history? Perhaps it's an investigation into existential crisis, the futility of existence where life gives equal prominence to tragedy, war and mundanity. Does the "I'd love to turn you on" section allude to the transportational power of drugs and the imagination to lift us out of our everyday worries?

Although McCartney's breezy mid-section contribution to the track, like *Getting Better*, appears in microcosm to show the bitter and sweet contrast of the two major songwriters' contrasting styles, that's too superficial an understanding of the band dynamic. *A Day In The Life* is most acclaimed for its two extraordinary experimental 'end of the world' orchestral interludes, yet the man behind the idea wasn't Lennon, as many might expect, but Paul, the admirer of avant garde composers John Cage and Luciano Berio.

MUSICAL ORGASM

When the original framework of the song included a 24-bar gap, the ever-ambitious McCartney suggested they commission a 90-piece orchestra to fill the hole. In the event, George Martin corralled 40 members of the Royal Philharmonic and London Symphony

Orchestra. When recording took place, famous friends including Mick Jagger and Marianne Faithfull, Keith Richards, Donovan and Michael Nesmith from The Monkees looked on in the studio. Adding to the fun (and irritation of the assembled sessioneers), the orchestra was asked to wear evening dress and put on fake noses, comedy hats, false eyes and bald wigs, much to the amusement of the assembled celebrity throng, with McCartney playing the role of conductor, baton in hand.

Lennon's request to Martin was for an orchestral section that was "a tremendous build-up, from nothing to something absolutely like the end of the world." Martin instructed the orchestra to create a blitzkrieg of organised chaos: "It's every man for himself. Don't listen to the fellow next to you. If he's a third away from you, let him go."

All that was left was the final E chord played by all four Beatles. An apocalyptic end of the world, but the start of a new one for rock music. ●

At the press launch for *Sgt Pepper*, held at Brian Epstein's house at 24 Chapel Street, London, w19 May 1967

SHIFTING SOUNDS

ON *REVOLVER* AND *SGT PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND* THE BEATLES HAD TIME TO EXPERIMENT IN THE STUDIO. AS NEIL CROSSLEY EXPLAINS, THEY PROCEEDED TO BREAK ALL THE RULES

When the four members of The Beatles entered EMI's Abbey Road Studios on 6 April 1966, they did so in the knowledge that they had three months ahead of them to create their seventh studio album. It was an extraordinary luxury for a band accustomed to shoehorning a few days or weeks here and there between live commitments and they seized the opportunity.

The Beatles had been striving for different sounds at Abbey Road Studios since their early days, although requests for effects such as compression or fuzz on a guitar would often be overruled. London may have been swinging, but artists looking to stretch sonic boundaries still had to adhere to tried and tested recording methods. But by the time they recorded *Revolver*, their success had given them *carte blanche* with EMI, the record label that owned Abbey Road Studios. The Beatles also had a major ally in producer George Martin, who fought their corner and helped them to achieve create their visions. In April 1966, another pivotal figure entered The Beatles' orbit – a 19-year-old engineer called Geoff Emerick.

Born in Crouch End, north London, Emerick first encountered The Beatles on his second day as a trainee at Abbey Road Studios, on 6 June 1962, when he sat in on their first session. Four years later, in April 1966, Emerick became The Beatles' in-house engineer. The decision to appoint him over some far more experienced engineers came from George Martin, although Emerick believed that Paul McCartney may have played a role. "I suspect Paul had something to do with that," Emerick said in 2016. "We got along well, and I was young, so he knew I would be open to the kind of experimentation they wanted to do."

HEIGHTENED STATE

The *Rubber Soul* sessions of 1965 had fuelled The Beatles' sonic exploration and encouraged them to use the studio as an instrument in itself. On *Revolver* they took this to new heights. They were helped from the ▶

Ringo and George Harrison arrive at Abbey Road Studios, for the first day of recording of *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, 24 November 1966

“THE BEATLES WERE KEEN TO REPLICATE THE HEIGHTENED SENSORY STATES BROUGHT ON BY LSD AND A NUMBER OF RECORDING INNOVATIONS WERE INTRODUCED”

Ringo presents Geoff Emerick with a Grammy award for his engineering work on *Sgt Pepper*

WEIRD THINGS

Years later, engineer Geoff Emerick concluded that the conservative management at EMI would have fired him on the spot had they known the unorthodox methods he was using in their studios at Abbey Road. But as George Martin put it in *Anthology*: "Geoff Emerick used to do things for The Beatles and be scared that the people above [in the EMI hierarchy] would find out. Engineers then weren't supposed to play about with microphones and things like that. But he used to do really weird things that were slightly illegitimate, with our support and approval."

outset by a fundamental change at Abbey Road Studios – for the very first time, EMI's four-track tape machines were placed in the studio's control room alongside the producer and engineer. This made it much easier for George Martin and Geoff Emerick to simply reach over and make instant alterations to recordings.

The Beatles were keen to replicate the heightened sensory states brought on by LSD and a number of recording innovations were introduced. Lennon, never a fan of his own voice, was particularly keen to utilise new vocal treatments. Emerick came up with the idea of feeding Lennon's vocal through a Leslie speaker cabinet, which was normally used as a loudspeaker for a Hammond organ. This effect was used on the first track to be recorded, *Tomorrow Never Knows*, a John Lennon composition which they started on 6 April 1966. "It's only got the one chord, and the whole thing is meant to be like a drone," said Lennon, adding that he wanted to sound "like the Dalai Lama chanting from a mountaintop".

Emerick used an echo chamber as well as the Leslie speakers to achieve the desired effect. When Lennon's vocal came through on the speakers in the control room at Studio Three, the rest of the band were awestruck. "It's the Dalai Lennon," quipped McCartney. The track also made extensive use of tape loops, an idea from McCartney that was influenced by avant-garde composer Karlheinz Stockhausen and later used to more extreme effect on *Revolution 9* on 'The White Album'.

CLOSE MIKING

As the recording of *Revolver* progressed, The Beatles' desire to change their sound really took hold. Lennon wanted to know why the bass sound on a Wilson Pickett record was much more powerful and boomier than the bass on any of The Beatles' records. This prompted Emerick to try new techniques for *Paperback Writer*. "That was the first time the bass sound had been heard in all its excitement," Emerick explained in Mark Lewisohn's book *The Complete Beatles Recordings Sessions*. "To get the loud bass sound Paul played a different bass, a Rickenbacker [a 4001S model]. Then we boosted it further by using a loudspeaker as a microphone. We positioned it directly in front of the bass speaker and the moving diaphragm of the second speaker made the electric current."

Much of Emerick's innovation focused on 'close miking' – placing microphones as close as possible to instruments when recording to achieve a richer, fuller sound. It earned him a curious reprimand for "microphone abuse" from EMI. But for The Beatles, it was a sonic epiphany.

> WITH *SGT PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND*, THE BEATLES ANNOUNCED THAT THEY WANTED TO CREATE AN ALBUM FILLED WITH SOUNDS THAT NO ONE HAD HEARD BEFORE

The first instrument to be close mic'd was the drum kit, following a request from Lennon for a "thunderous" drum sound on the track *Rain*. Emerick moved the microphones right up to the drum heads and used a Fairchild 660 limiter to provide heavy compression. He also stuffed a large sweater inside Ringo's kick drum to deaden the sound. The result was a powerful and propulsive drum sound. "What have you done to my drums?" Ringo asked Emerick. "They sound fantastic." Buoyed up by this success, Emerick began close miking other instruments.

Microphones were placed inside the bells of the brass instruments on *Good Day Sunshine*. On 28 April 1966, during the recording of *Eleanor Rigby*, Emerick turned his attention to strings. McCartney said that he wanted to avoid "Mantovani" strings, so Emerick miked up the four violins, two cellos and two violas so closely that the microphones were almost touching the strings. The musicians were reportedly horrified by such close positioning. In his book *Here, There And Everywhere: My Life Recording*, Geoff Emerick recalls that George Martin had to instruct the players not to back away from the microphones.

STAR GUITARS

Central to the Beatles' shifting sound were the new guitars and amps that they would use on *Revolver*. The band had become unhappy with their guitar sounds, particularly their lack of presence, and the new equipment created a more impactful sound. George Harrison's main guitar on the album was his newly acquired 1964 Gibson SG Standard. He and Lennon also played their 1961 Sonic Blue Fender Stratocasters – bought for them by tour manager Mal Evans in February 1965 – and their Gibson J-160E acoustic guitars. In the spring of 1966, Harrison and Lennon also bought Epiphone Casinos, which would feature on the album. For McCartney, meanwhile, an Epiphone Casino and a Fender Esquire would be used for lead and rhythm guitar work, while his Rickenbacker 4001S would become the go-to bass for the *Revolver* sessions

The band also had some powerful amps working in their favour. A cream-coloured Fender Bassman, originally intended for McCartney, was soon appropriated by Harrison. He and Lennon also benefitted from two new Fender Showmans with 1x15" cabs, and two 120-watt Vox 7120 amps.

Emerick's favourite mic for recording guitars was the Neumann U47 tube microphone, which he positioned at a more traditional 12 to 18 inches away from the speaker cabinets. "That's where it sounded good," he recalled. The Fairchild 660 limiter too proved invaluable for recording the guitars. "Even if you just plug it in and use its circuitry, it sounds like the best tube amp ever," he said. It's a sound that can be savoured on tracks such as *Taxman*, *And Your Bird Can Sing* and *She Said She Said*.

One year later, with the Beatles' touring days well and truly behind them, Emerick was once more in the

engineer's chair as The Beatles embarked on their ninth studio album, *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, in Studio Two at Abbey Road.

The Beatles announced that they wanted to create an album filled with sounds that no one had heard before. Neither they or Emerick knew how to create such sounds, but as ever, the young engineer employed a mix of fearless ingenuity and pragmatism.

Emerick set himself the task of never recording the same instrument the same way twice. He would spend hours on guitar tones, repositioning the large Neumann U47 microphones to get the best possible sound. This approach worked wonders on Paul McCartney's bass. Emerick had McCartney sitting in the centre of the vast Studio Two, with a microphone positioned six feet away to pick up the ambience of the room.

Emerick also broke new ground by encouraging McCartney to record some of his bass lines after the songs were recorded, rather than at the beginning. McCartney would stay in the studio late at night, with Emerick and fellow engineer Richard Lush, crafting his bass lines to fit the rhythmic and melodic nuances of the tracks. Emerick then applied EQ, compression and limiting to sculpt the sound so it had its own space in the mix.

Not all the solutions were technological. On *A Day In The Life*, Ringo's drums were given an unorthodox treatment to make them a prominent feature in the mix, as Lennon and McCartney had requested. Rising to the challenge, Emerick asked Ringo to tune the toms very ▶

With The Beatles no longer performing live, they finally had the chance to explore the possibilities of the studio

CIRCUS SOUNDS

On *Being For The Benefit Of Mr Kite* Lennon had asked for a "carnival atmosphere", adding that he wanted "to smell the sawdust on the floor". Emerick spliced together multiple recordings of fairground organs and calliope music but after hours of unsuccessful experimentation, at George Martin's suggestion, he chopped the tape into pieces with scissors, threw them all up in the air, and then reassembled them at random. It worked wonders.

low by loosening the skins. Emerick then removed the skins from the bottom of the toms, wrapped a mic in a tea cloth, put it in a glass jug, and placed it on the floor under the drums. The result was the vast timpani-like sound on the verses of *A Day In The Life*, which was hailed as one of the best drum sounds ever recorded when the album was released.

It took 700 hours of studio time to create almost 40 minutes of music on *Sgt Pepper*. For Geoff Emerick, one of the most enduring memories was of the moment they played back the rough mix of *A Day In The Life*.

"The night we dubbed in the orchestra on *A Day In The Life*, there was a kind of party in the studio. I set up a rough monitor mix to play for everybody, and Ron Richards, who was the producer for The Hollies, was in the control room. When I played back the rough mix, Ron just put his head in his hands. And he was serious. There was silence after we finished playing it back. It was like you were watching a black and white film, and suddenly there was colour and Cinemascope. The feeling in that control room was just amazing. Nobody had ever heard anything like it in their lives."

Despite his substantial role in helping forge the sound of *Revolver* and *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* Geoff Emerick's name does not appear anywhere on the packaging for either album. EMI's view was that sound engineers were technicians, and as such did not merit recognition on releases. US music industry body the Recording Academy was all too aware of his contribution, however, and in 1967 awarded him a Grammy for Best Recorded Album of 1967 for his work on *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*.

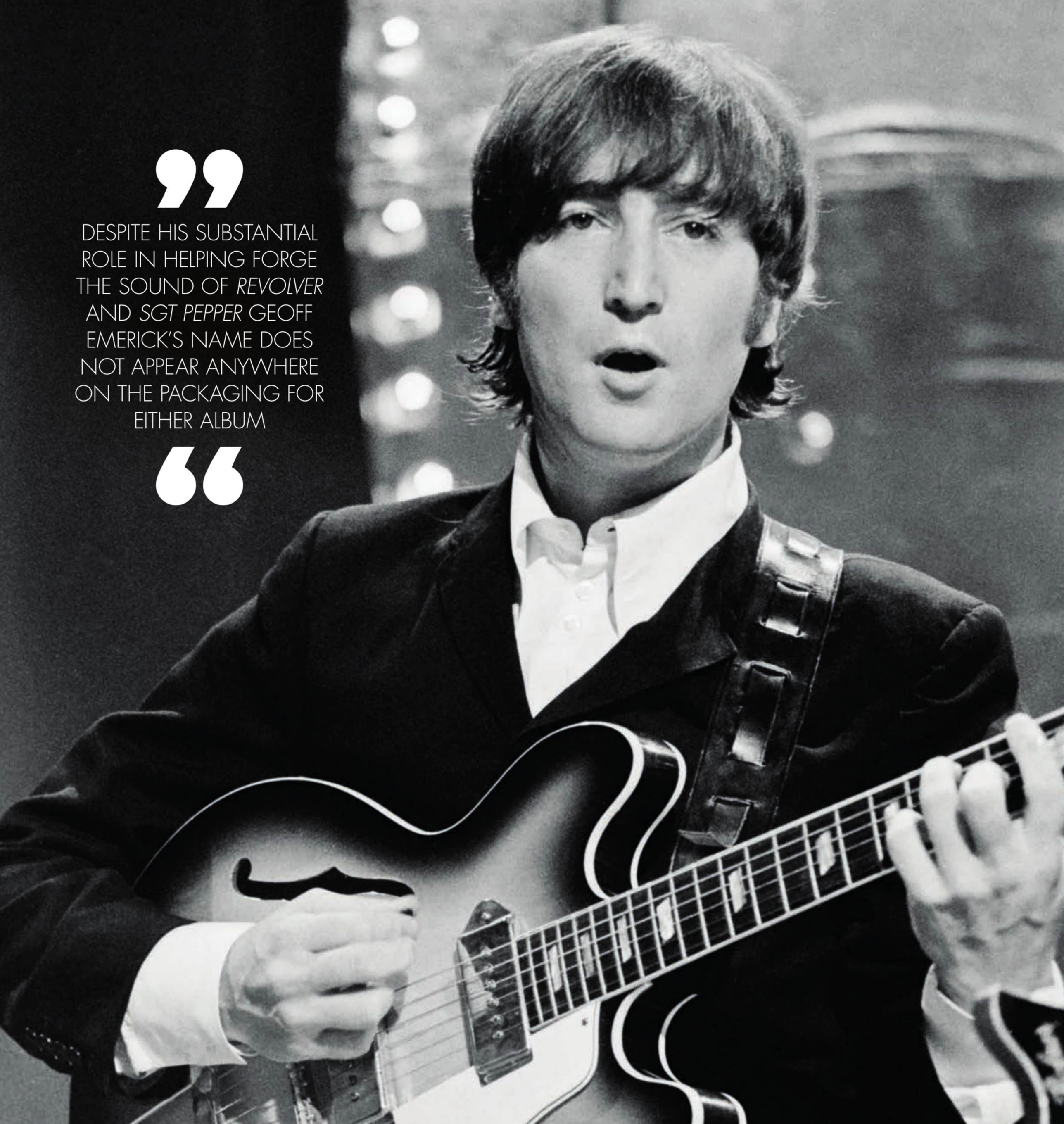
Lennon's songwriting in particularly benefited from the band's sonic experiments in the studio

ENDURING LEGACY

In subsequent decades Emerick's contribution would become widely acknowledged. He would go on to work with artists such as America, Supertramp, Ultravox and Elvis Costello. He was also recording engineer on Wings' *Band On The Run* album (1973), which earned him another Grammy, and McCartney solo albums such as *London Town* (1978), *Tug Of War* (1982) and *Flaming Pie* (1997). Emerick once said that he had always been perceived by the other Beatles as "Paul's guy". When Emerick died of a heart attack in Los Angeles on 2 October 2018, at the age of 72, McCartney paid a fitting tribute to the gifted engineer.

"Geoff had a sense of humour that fitted well with our attitude to work in the studio and was always open to the many new ideas that we threw at him. He grew to understand what we liked to hear and developed all sorts of techniques to achieve this… We spent many exciting hours in the studio and he never failed to come up with the goods… I'll always remember him with great fondness and I know his work will be long remembered by connoisseurs of sound." ●

Sir George Martin and Geoff Emerick in later life, reflecting on their legacy at Abbey Road



DESPITE HIS SUBSTANTIAL ROLE IN HELPING FORGE THE SOUND OF *REVOLVER* AND *SGT PEPPER* GEOFF EMERICK'S NAME DOES NOT APPEAR ANYWHERE ON THE PACKAGING FOR EITHER ALBUM

STRAWBERRY FIELDS FOREVER

HAD EVENTS CONSPIRED DIFFERENTLY, *STRAWBERRY FIELDS FOREVER* WOULD HAVE BEEN A CORNERSTONE OF *SGT PEPPER*. NEIL CROSSLEY ASSESSES ITS CREATION AND WHY IT NEVER MADE THE FINAL CUT...

"The biggest mistake of my professional life" is how George Martin described his decision to leave *Strawberry Fields Forever* and *Penny Lane* off the *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* album. To be fair, it wasn't his decision alone. The band's record labels on both sides of the Atlantic – Parlophone in the UK and Capitol in the US – were clamoring for new product and piling pressure on Brian Epstein. In a concerted effort to placate them, Epstein asked George Martin for a strong single. "I decided to give him a super-strong combination," recalled Martin in Kenneth Womack's 2018 book *Sound Pictures: The Life Of Beatles Producer George Martin, The Later Years, 1966-2016*, "a double-punch that could not fail, an unbeatable linking of two all-time great songs: *Strawberry Fields Forever* and *Penny Lane*."

From the outset of The Beatles' recording career, Epstein and Martin had pursued a policy of never including Beatles singles on their albums. This is why *Strawberry Fields Forever* and *Penny Lane* were never tracklisted on *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Both songs were initially intended to be included, however, and *Strawberry Fields Forever* was the first track to be recorded on the *Sgt Pepper* sessions, on 24 November 1966. John Lennon had written the song while on holiday in Almería, southern Spain, while filming the Richard Lester-directed anti-war comedy *How I Won The War*. The track was inspired by his childhood memories of playing in the garden of Strawberry Field, a Salvation Army children's home, close to where he grew up in the Liverpool suburb of Woolton. Lennon demoed the song on acoustic guitar back in his home studio at Weybridge, Surrey. (This version was released on the *Anthology 2* CD in 1996.)

"It was just a great, great song, that was apparent from the first time John sang it for all of us, playing an acoustic guitar," recalled engineer Geoff Emerick. "Everyone was fired up and full of creative ideas after the break. Most exciting was the idea that, freed from the rigours of touring, they no longer had to worry about having to play the new material live, so we literally could take the song in any direction."

McCartney also loved the track, and contributed a Mellotron flute intro. George Harrison added slide guitar, while Ringo draped towels on his kit to create the distinctive muffled sound. After three takes, the track was finished. But after listening to his earlier acetate of the song, Lennon decided it needed to be heavier, and that meant starting from scratch. What had begun as a gloriously simple recording morphed into epic open-ended sessions, that soon took their toll. "More time was spent on *Strawberry Fields Forever* than any other Beatles song," said Emerick. "It was, I believe, the first time a Beatles song had been re-recorded in its entirety."

TAKING ITS TOLL

But Lennon wasn't satisfied with the revised version. After listening again to the earlier acetate, he announced that he preferred the original opening bars and would like the two versions, played in different keys

***Strawberry Fields Forever* is now thought of as one of Lennon's greatest achievements in The Beatles**

THE PROMO FILM

The promo films for *Strawberry Fields Forever* and *Penny Lane* were shot at Knole Park, in Sevenoaks, Kent, which is owned by the National Trust. Work began on Monday 20 January 1967, with the *Strawberry Fields Forever* film being shot that evening. A number of the sequences feature a dead oak tree, which was situated near the park's birdhouse, although the tree is no longer there. Both films were produced by Tony Bramwell and shot on colour 35mm film. The Swedish director Peter Goldmann had been recommended by Klaus Voormann.

Bramwell spent two days dressing up a large tree in the park to resemble "a piano and harp combined, with strings". At one point in the film, John, Paul, George and Ringo pour paint over the construction.

Abstract imagery, reverse film effects, stop motion animation and jump cuts from day to night all feature in the film. For Beatles fans who had not seen the band for some time, the film came as something of a shock. Any semblance of their previous mop-top selves had been eradicated. The band were decked out in an array of psychedelic gear and all sported moustaches. For the first time, Lennon could be seen wearing the granny glasses that would become his visual trademark in the late-60s. George Harrison looked particularly austere, with full beard and heavy balaclava.

"There's an appropriately surreal air about the film," commented Chris Ingham in the 2006 edition of *The Rough Guide To The Beatles*, "…which, when experienced simultaneously with The Beatles' extraordinary new music, is deliciously disorientating."

and different tempos, joined together. "My jaw dropped," recalled Emerick in his autobiography *Here, There And Everywhere: My Life Recording The Music Of The Beatles*. "Out of the corner of my eye, I could see George Martin blinking slowly. I could almost detect his blood pressure rising."

Martin informed Lennon that it wasn't possible. "You can fix it, George," replied Lennon. Armed with editing scissors, a varispeed control and two tape machines, Martin and Emerick set about the unenviable task of matching the two versions – the "original, lighter" version of take seven in the key of A major, and the "intense, scored version" of take 26 in the key of B major.

The tracks were joined together at exactly one minute in. "George [Martin] and I decided to allow the second half to play all the way through at the slower speed," says Emerick. "Doing so gave John's voice a smoky, thick quality that complemented the psychedelic lyric and swirling instrumentation."

MYSTIC MASTERPIECE

Strawberry Fields Forever was released as a double A-side with *Penny Lane* on 13 February 1967 and in what one observer has since called "the most disgraceful statistic in chart history", it was kept at No.2 by Engelbert Humperdinck's *Release Me*.

John Lennon once described the song as "psychoanalysis set to music" and one of his most honest songs. It is regarded by many as Lennon's masterpiece, although his view of it seemed to fluctuate over the years.

In a review on 11 February 1967, *Melody Maker* concluded that *Strawberry Fields Forever* was a "swooping, deep, mystic kaleidoscope of sound", adding that "the whole concept shows The Beatles in a new, far-out light".

Over five decades on from its release, *Strawberry Fields Forever* is generally thought of as one of The Beatles' most outstanding creative triumphs. In 2006, it was voted the second best Beatles song ever, after *A Day In The Life*. Richie Unterberger of AllMusic describes *Strawberry Fields Forever* as "one of The Beatles' peak achievements and one of the finest Lennon-McCartney songs". It is a view echoed by Ian MacDonald in his book *Revolution In The Head*. "*Strawberry Fields Forever*, shows expression of a high order," wrote McDonald. "Few, if any [contemporary composers], are capable of displaying feeling and fantasy so direct, spontaneous and original." ●

TO EARTH WITH LOVE

IT WAS A DEFINING MOMENT FOR THE BEATLES THAT SPAWNED THEIR ANTHEM FOR THE SUMMER OF LOVE. THE *OUR WORLD* GLOBAL TELECAST UNITED THE PLANET VIA SATELLITE AND MADE HISTORY. RIK FLYNN PLUGS IN

In 2008, NASA beamed that most apt of The Beatles' creations – *Across The Universe* – into deep space to commemorate the collective 50th anniversary of both the agency and the band. But it was not the first time that Beatles music had been transmitted beyond our atmosphere, and it was not the first time the perfect song had been chosen. In fact, just over 40 years earlier, thanks to one man's pioneering vision and an incredible unified effort amongst multiple nations, one of the group's best-loved songs was amongst the first to be sent heavenward as part of a rare, truly global event.

On 18 May 1967, The Beatles were signed up to represent the vanguard of British creativity on *Our World*, planet Earth's very first satellite telecast. Transmitted to an audience of over 400 million across five different continents, this would be the first time in history that everyone could watch the same TV programme (almost) anywhere in the world. This landmark feat was achieved via three carefully co-ordinated satellites – the Intelsat I (Early Bird), Intelsat II (Lana Bird) and ATS-1 – that all conjoined 23,000 miles above the Earth to send out a cultural, historical and technical extravaganza of epic proportions.

BBC publicity made the proud announcement: "For the first time ever, linking five continents and bringing man face to face with mankind, in places as far apart as Canberra and Cape Kennedy, Moscow and Montreal, Samarkand and Söderfors, Takamatsu and Tunis." With the only axioms being that no politicians or state figureheads were allowed, and no pre-recorded film, 19 nations were given their own time slot to send out the transmission.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

The incredibly diverse schedule included everything from the Vienna Boy's Choir singing in 22 languages to Canadian ranchers herding cattle; from Pablo Picasso's fine art and Maria Callas' operatic pipes to deep space objects; from live childbirth to the construction of the Tokyo subway. The world found out about The Beatles' ▶

The world's media descend on EMI's Abbey Road Studios to take photos of The Beatles prior to their historic endeavour

George Martin looks on as The Beatles ready themselves for their live transmission

involvement on 22 May, a few days after the initial BBC release. Expectations were further raised when news arrived that the band had been commissioned to write a song especially for the event. With the Beeb's basic brief to "keep it simple so that viewers across the globe will understand", the band, it seems, were unfazed. Indeed, as the historic day loomed ever closer, Lennon was perhaps a little too lax about the task in hand. "I don't know if they had prepared any ideas, but they left it very late to write the song," remembered engineer Geoff Emerick. "John said, 'Oh God, is it that close?! I suppose we'd better write something!'"

Nonchalance aside, Lennon no doubt quietly understood the importance (and possibilities) of this tacit commission and – whether conjured up in haste or already in the tank – the resulting technicolour ensemble, *All You Need Is Love*, would soon become a unifying perennial. Paul McCartney had put two of his own compositions on the table including *Hello, Goodbye*, (itself a worldwide hit soon after), but both were waived in favour of John's all-embracing creation.

The song couldn't have been more appropriate, arriving smack-bang in the middle of the so-called 'Summer of Love' and serving as a tender foil to the horrors of Vietnam, a conflict then in full flight. With daily body counts broadcast across the States, worldwide demonstrations would punctuate the summer months that year. For such a conciliatory sentiment to reach the world in one singular moment could not have been more compelling.

> THE SONG COULDN'T HAVE BEEN MORE APPROPRIATE, ARRIVING SMACK-BANG IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SO-CALLED 'SUMMER OF LOVE' AND SERVING AS A TENDER FOIL TO THE HORRORS OF VIETNAM

satellites in geo-stationary orbit could broadcast to and from anywhere in the world – to life. When in 1966, as Clarke had predicted, three satellites were sent into just such an orbit, Singer made his move. After 10 months of meticulous planning, the go-ahead was given. Despite dissent from some quarters decrying The Beatles as poor representatives for the UK, endorsement from the biggest band in the world allowed Singer's highly ambitious project to take on a newfound momentum.

Although six countries from the Eastern Bloc – including the Soviet Union – pulled out just one week before broadcast in protest to the Western response to the Six-Day War, the two-and-a-half hour black and white programme went ahead with a staggering 14 different partner nations involved: Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, France, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Spain, Sweden, Tunisia, United Kingdom, USA and West Germany. Non-contributing countries who still aired the programme included Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal and Switzerland. The largest televisual experience the world had ever seen was successfully staged thanks to a mammoth collective team of 10,000 – amongst them producers, technicians, translators and announcers.

THE PERFECT SONG

Only a few months earlier, Muhammad Ali had made his voice heard by refusing his draft into the Army; while far less controversial, The Beatles' ode to pacifism made a similar stand.

"Obviously at that period it was the perfect song," remembered Harrison. "The message was so simple… it was a great excuse to go right in the middle of that whole culture that was happening and give them a theme tune."

In charge of the whole operation was BBC Head of Features Aubrey Singer, who had approached the European Broadcasting Union one year earlier with a pioneering vision. Singer wanted to bring sci-fi novelist Arthur C Clarke's theory – that three (then uninvented)

LIVE TRANSMISSION

Co-ordinated from BBC Television Centre, *Our World* was broadcast on 25 June 1967 between 7.55pm and 10pm GMT. The band had little time to prepare and in the days leading up to the performance, George Martin had wisely decided that a simple backing track with some rudimentary vocals should be pre-recorded for the band to play along to on the night (although the BBC weren't enamoured by the idea). The experimental, studio-based sounds of the recently-released *Sgt Pepper* album – no doubt still ringing in his ears – certainly lent credence to this precaution.

As Martin had predicted, the backing track was far from straightforward. At its centre was what Lennon dubbed a 'freaky orchestra' that involved himself on harpsichord and Harrison and McCartney inexpertly moonlighting on violin and double bass. Drums, ▶

piano, banjo and vocals were then added to fill out the sound before Martin finished it off with recorded sections of the 13-piece orchestra assembled for the later live performance.

At 2pm on the day of broadcast, the band rehearsed in front of cameras in EMI's Studio 1 with the signal beamed through a satellite in a high-tech van parked outside. The Beatles' slot followed a section that showed Leonard Bernstein rehearsing a Rachmaninoff concerto at the Lincoln Center in New York. Then, just before 9pm, a little earlier than expected, the feed cut to Abbey Road Studios.

"We actually went on air about 40 seconds early," remembered Emerick. "George and I were having a welcome shot of Scotch whisky when we got the word over the intercom. There was a big panic to hide the bottle and the glasses. We were shoving them under the mixing console!"

Whisky safely stowed, the long-awaited segment began. As the camera zoomed in on the band engaged in 'fake' rehearsal, Martin – filmed in the control room – readied the band for the final recording. "There's several days' work on that tape," announced Steve Race on the mannerly voiceover. "For perhaps the hundredth time, the engineer runs it back to the start, to yet another stage in the making of an almost-certain hit record. The supervisor is George Martin, the musical brain behind all The Beatles' records. There's the orchestra coming into the studio now, and you'll notice that the musicians are not rock and roll youngsters. The Beatles get on best with symphony men."

While Race's final statement raises a wry smile now, it's interesting to note that amongst the orchestra was one David Mason, the trumpeter who'd provided that piccolo trumpet solo in *Penny Lane* just a few months earlier.

HERE WE GO

At 9.36pm, came the cue from Martin: "Right, here we go, here comes the tape," before the orchestra fired up into a brief section of *La Marseillaise* (the French

The Beatles show off their multilingual sandwich boards that would make up part of the set for their *Our World* performance

Ringo and George in their none-more-psychedelic *Our World* get-up

The Beatles arrive at EMI Studios, 24 June 1967

National Anthem) that segued into the now-familiar intro to *All You Need Is Love*. The band then played along to their base track, with lead vocals, bass, drums, orchestra and Harrison's guitar solo performed live.

While not fully appreciated until it was later colourised for *Anthology*, the studio was decorated to match the sentiment of the song, with a technicolour backdrop of flowers, balloons, streamers and general hippy detritus. Seated on high stools, the band themselves were dressed in suitably peace-loving attire. McCartney sported a shirt that he had decorated himself (it was stolen after the show), Ringo's hefty outfit consisted of silk, suede and fake fur and apparently "weighed a ton", while Lennon chose an embellished silvery coat and Harrison a brightly-coloured shirt. Also present on set were sandwich boards declaring the song's title in several languages, as well as one cryptic

WHILE NOT FULLY APPRECIATED UNTIL IT WAS LATER COLOURISED, THE STUDIO WAS DECORATED TO MATCH THE SENTIMENT OF THE SONG, WITH A BACKDROP OF FLOWERS, BALLOONS AND STREAMERS

> IN 1967, THE BEATLES WERE AT A CROSSROADS. TIRED OF THE ADOLESCENT SCREAMS, THEY'D CALLED TIME ON TOURING. THE MOP-TOPS OF OLD WERE LONG GONE

placard that read 'Come Back Milly!', a reference to McCartney's Aunt Milly, who had gone to Australia.

Beyond the suited 'symphony men', John, Paul, George and Ringo were surrounded by a slightly more felicitous entourage – also dressed in high psychedelia – that included Rolling Stones Keith Richards, Mick Jagger, Eric Clapton and The Who's Keith Moon. Marianne Faithfull, Graham Nash, George's wife Pattie, Paul's girlfriend Jane Asher and his brother Mike all sat in support too.

As the segment drew to a close, a marvellously haphazard outro upped the psychedelia. Various musical accoutrements crashed together in noisy dénouement: snippets of *Greensleeves* and Glenn Miller's classic big-band swing *In The Mood* clashed with strings from Bach's Brandenburg concertos, whoops and cheers from the band and even a cursory chorus vocal of the band's early hit, *She Loves You*.

Thankfully, all had passed without a hitch. The foursome remained behind at the studio to record the finishing overdubs for their historic new single, and the following day *All You Need Is Love* was sent to production.

LANDMARK MOMENT

In 1967, The Beatles were at a crossroads. Tired of the adolescent screams, they'd called time on touring. The mop-tops of old were long-gone, and Dylan's provocative social commentary had made its indelible mark. British philosopher Bertrand Russell had turned them on to the cause and they found themselves at the epicentre of a fast-expanding pacifistic movement. It's little wonder that when rush-released as a single that July, *All You Need Is Love* would become the soundtrack for the Flower Power crusade.

It was, as Beatles biographer Mark Lewisohn opined, the "perfect encapsulation and embodiment of the summer of 1967 and its anthemic qualities are as real today as the day it was written". Add the political traction garnered from its inclusion at the close of *Our World*, and a global connection had truly been made. *All You Need Is Love* went to No.1 in the UK and the US – and right across the world. ●

Our World **was broadcast to 24 countries worldwide, showing off The Beatles to an audience of over 400 million**

BRIAN EPSTEIN

THE LIFE OF BRIAN

WHEN BRIAN EPSTEIN DIED ON 27 AUGUST 1967, THE BEATLES LOST THEIR GUIDING LIGHT. STEVE O'BRIEN LOOKS AT THE LIFE OF THE MAN WHO PERHAPS MORE THAN ANYONE COULD CLAIM TO BE 'THE FIFTH BEATLE'...

There's a common misreading of Brian Epstein, that he was a 'straight', the quiet, suit-rocking, short-back-and-sides-sporting business brain that somehow managed to find himself a primary player in the story that defined the 60s. Viewing those interviews from the time, he looks like the ultimate establishment figure, a man who managed to look 50, even at the age of 30.

But that sensible, Savile Row-tailored exterior masked a life that was, in many ways, more rock and roll than many of the artists he managed. From the moment he began his career in pop, he'd developed a thirst for the high life that would eventually lead to a spell in Putney's fabled Priory Clinic. He was also gay at a time when men sleeping with men was still prosecutable. In fact, it was only a month before Brian Epstein died, on 27 August 1967 of an overdose of barbiturates, that homosexuality was (partially) decriminalised in the United Kingdom. If rock and roll was the club for outsiders, Epstein was, despite outward appearances, the ultimate outsider, whether it be the homosexuality he was forced to keep secret or, given the far-flung antisemitism of the time, his Jewishness.

Despite being collared, when he was in his 20s, for "persistent importuning" outside a men's toilet in Swiss Cottage, Epstein's homosexuality was never public knowledge, but within the broadly liberal entertainment industry, Epstein's sexuality was no secret, and The Beatles were typically quick to defend their manager, whom they affectionately referred to as 'Eppy', against homophobic gibes. Though Lennon, in particular, was sometimes guilty of a sarky jab, few outside the group's tight circle were allowed to get away with mocking their manager. When a friend of Lennon's from art school named Ian Sharp asked the band, "Which one of you does he fancy?", he found himself immediately ostracised from the group. A few days later, Sharp received a letter from Epstein's lawyers demanding a retraction.

In his autobiography, Pete Best claimed ▶

Epstein and the band arrive
at Tokyo International Airport
ahead of their tour,
29 June 1966

Epstein was upset that he was not honoured along with Lennon, McCartney, Harrison, and Starr when they received the MBEs in 1965, though Harrison once joked that the MBE stood for "Mister Brian Epstein"

> I DON'T KNOW THE TRUTH OF THE JOHN RUMOUR. I SUSPECTED THE JOHN THING WITH BRIAN WAS A POWER-PLAY. AS TO WHETHER THERE WAS ANY GAY DALLIANCE OR WHATEVER, I DON'T KNOW

that Epstein drove them both to Blackpool one evening where Epstein expressed his "very fond admiration", and asking, "Would you find it embarrassing if I ask you to stay in a hotel overnight?" Best turned the offer down, and the incident was never mentioned again.

BRIAN AND JOHN

A rumour persists, however, whether anything ever happened between Epstein and Lennon, specifically on a much-speculated-about holiday in April 1963. Just three weeks after Lennon's wife Cynthia gave birth to Julian, John and Brian flew off to Barcelona. Lennon intimated later that something may have occurred between the two, teasing, "The rumours went around that he and I were having a love affair. Well, it was almost a love affair, but not quite. It was never consummated. But it was a pretty intense relationship. We used to sit in a café in Torremolinos looking at all the boys and I'd say, 'Do you like that one, do you like this one?'"

"I don't know the truth of the John rumour," Paul McCartney said in a 2000 *Arena* documentary on Epstein. "I suspected the John thing with Brian was a power-play. As to whether there was any gay dalliance or whatever, I don't know."

Most fans, of course, know the story of when Epstein descended the steps of Mathew St's Cavern Club to witness The Beatles for the first time, later expressing, in that oft-repeated TV interview, how he'd been struck "by their music, their beat and their sense of humour on stage". We also know the apocryphal story of how his Liverpool record shop, NEMS, was first alerted to the Fab Four when a customer by the name of Raymond Jones asked for the *My Bonnie* single (truth is, Epstein's personal assistant, Alistair Taylor, used the name of Jones – who actually existed and was a regular visitor to the store – to order to 25 copies of the song, so fed up was he of kids coming in and pestering them about this new band. Brian himself then hand wrote a sign that was pasted onto the front window: "Beatles record available here").

But Brian Epstein never lived to be grilled as intensively as his boys would be about his life and career. For the manager of the biggest band on the

> EPSTEIN DID RELEASE AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY, *A CELLARFUL OF NOISE* IN 1964, BUT IT'S AS NOTABLE FOR WHAT IT LEAVES OUT AS WHAT IT LEAVES IN

planet, precious few interviews exist with the man of whom Paul McCartney said, "if anyone was 'the fifth Beatle', it was Brian". Of course, Epstein did release an autobiography, *A Cellarful Of Noise* in 1964 (though the dull reality is that it was ghostwritten by future Beatles publicist and spin doctor-extraordinaire, Derek Taylor), but it's as notable for what it leaves out as what it leaves in. There's – fairly obviously – no mention of his homosexuality and it reads sometimes more as a marketing tool for the various artists he managed, yet its slightness has only added, over time, to the sense of enigma that circles Epstein.

When The Beatles story is laid out, Epstein usually features heavily at the beginning, credited for getting the boys out of their Hamburg leathers and into suits, before fading into the background, reappearing only on the event of his death, as if he vanished from the lives of John, Paul, George and Ringo after setting them up for the big time. Yet his role in breaking them in America is often ignored. It was he who secured them a place on the ratings-busting *Ed Sullivan Show*, after negotiating for the boys to be given top billing in return for performing for a reduced fee, winning them the highest audience in American TV history.

He was never the most accomplished businessman. He claimed himself he probably lacked some of the cold-eyed ruthlessness that a great manager needs and there are examples when his lack of experience manifested itself (such as when he signed away 90% of the merchandising rights for the band), but he was always the right man to manage The Beatles.

"He seems to have a genuine respect for them and their music," journalist Maureen Cleave said at the time, "unlike a lot of managers in this business, who make a lot of money out of the people they look after, and I think, at rock bottom, despise them."

UPPERS AND DOWNERS

What is true is that, once The Beatles decided to stop touring in 1966, Epstein's influence began to lessen. Though drugs had been present in his life since the early 60s (he'd started popping amphetamines at the beginning of his management career and was introduced to pot, along with the rest of The Beatles, by Bob Dylan), by 1966/67, his drug intake had escalated to the point that uppers were routinely followed by downers before the whole vicious circle started again.

With The Beatles swapping the stadium for the studio, there was less for Epstein to do with his number one band. Though he also managed a ream of other groups and artists, from Gerry And The Pacemakers to Cilla Black, The Beatles were his first and abiding love. (He told Gerry Marsden, who'd sounded off at how much time their manager had been spending with The Beatles, "These four guys are stars, you're a little lightbulb.")

Patti Boyd, George Harrison and Cilla Black with Epstein, 28 May 1964

The trouble was, there was little outside of The Beatles to fill Epstein's time. He'd given over much of the running of NEMS in 1966 to impresario and future Bee Gees manager Robert Stigwood, and there was no boyfriend at home in Belgravia to shares his woes with. "He was very lonely," his butler, Lonnie Trimble, reflected, "because he couldn't find a partner. The only partners he could find were the ones that he had to pick up."

Epstein died on 27 August 1967, at his home in Chapel Street, from an overdose of the later-banned sedative Carbitral, with The Beatles being informed of his death while in Bangor with the Indian guru

HULLABALOO

Aside from his work behind-the-scenes, Epstein had a short-lived career in front of the camera, presenting segments on an American music TV show titled *Hullabaloo*. Running for two seasons between 1965 and 1966 it acted as a showcase for the big pop acts of the day, with names such as Sammy Davis Jr, Petula Clark, Paul Anka, Liza Minnelli, Jack Jones, David McCallum and Frankie Avalon appearing on its stages. Although primarily made in America, some acts were recorded at Shepperton Studios in Surrey, which is where Epstein filmed his links. Although there are no full episodes available, there are clips available on YouTube.

THE BEATLES STORY IS LITTERED WITH 'WHAT IF'S, BUT THE PERHAPS THE GREATEST IS, WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED TO THE FAB FOUR HAD EPSTEIN NOT DOWNED THOSE SIX CARBITRAL PILLS THAT NIGHT?

THE MAN WHO

A big-screen biopic of Brian Epstein has been in the works for several years now, but recent reports suggest the movie, now titled *The Man Who*, is near to becoming a reality. A press release, issued earlier this year, announced that the film would be "the antithesis of a traditional staid biopic".

"*The Man Who* is the incredible story of Beatles' manager Brian Epstein, seen through the lens of a fictional interview on the *Ed Sullivan Show*," it reads. "By examining Brian's life through this prism – which ultimately proves to be Brian's dying memories – it allows us to play fast and loose with time and structure, reality and fantasy, and really get under his skin. It also offers us a glimpse of the Beatles phenomenon from Brian's unique perspective, which has never been seen before."

Mamma Mia! star Dominic Cooper is inked to play Epstein, with Dennis Quaid as Ed Sullivan and *Book Thief* actor Ben Schnetzer as John Lennon. It's due to be directed by *Spike Island* helmer Mat Whitecross and is produced by Tom Hanks and Jude Law.

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. The inquest later concluded that the death was accidental with the pathologist stating that Epstein had been taking Carbitral for some time, and that the barbiturate level in Epstein's blood was a "low fatal level".

WHAT IF...?

The Beatles story is littered with 'what if's, but the perhaps the greatest is, what would have happened to the Fab Four had Epstein not downed those six Carbitral pills that night? Though the years after yielded some of The Beatles' greatest work, some of those calamitous decisions, whether it be the *Magical Mystery Tour* TV disaster or the grand chaos that was Apple Corps, would most likely have been avoided.

"I knew we were in trouble then," Lennon reflected to *Rolling Stone* in 1971. "I didn't really have any misconceptions about our ability to do anything other than play music and I was scared. I thought, 'We've fuckin' had it now'."

For McCartney, there was no one who could have ever replaced Epstein: "They wouldn't have the flair, the panache, the wit, the intelligence..." he said, years later. "They would merely be money managers."

It's now 52 years since Brian Epstein passed on, and he remains a cryptic, faintly unknowable figure in Beatles-lore. In 2006 Cynthia Lennon said of him, "I think Brian's one of the forgotten people," claiming he had been "written out of the [Beatles] story". Even in Liverpool, there's little that acknowledges the man who helped birth the city's most famous sons. This year, on 19 September, which would have been his 85th birthday, a fundraiser was launched to honour Brian Epstein in his hometown, with the idea of "creating a unique, beautiful and lasting sculptural tribute" to the late Beatles manager.

Epstein was only 32 when he died and his abrupt death arguably derailed The Beatles and set the course for their eventual disintegration. He was the glue that held those four disparate, abrasive personalities together. And he seemed, even early on, to know the lasting cultural value of his most prized clients, when he was asked whether the Fabs' music would last: "The children of the 21st century," he stated, "will be listening to The Beatles." How right he was. ●

Epstein had no prior experience of artist management, yet he had a strong influence on the band's early dress code

THE FAB FOUR WAGS CLUB

IT WAS AT THE BEGINNING OF 1966 THAT GEORGE HARRISON MARRIED PATTIE BOYD, BECOMING THE THIRD BEATLE TO TIE THE KNOT. STEVE O'BRIEN LOOKS AT THE INFLUENCE OF THE WIVES AND GIRLFRIENDS OF THE FABS

Watch any documentary on The Beatles and its pictures are always chock with swooning girls and fainting fans. Female adoration was the fuel on which much of Beatlemania thrived and those ear-shattering screams virtually soundtracked those early years. But away from the screeching and the wailing, behind the scenes, it was the wives and the girlfriends of the four Beatles that shaped their personal lives, and, in many cases, inspired some of their greatest songs.

Of course, at the beginning, their fans knew nothing of all this. Brian Epstein was keen for his boys' love lives to be kept out of the public eye, reasoning that, if the fans suspected that their favourite Beatle wasn't, in fact, single that somehow they'd stop screaming. How would the fanbase have reacted in 1963, for instance, had they known that one Beatle was not only married, but had a kid? The power of those lyrics – "I wanna hold your hand", "baby, it's you", "I wanna be your man" – was in fans believing those songs could be about them, not that The Beatles could have written those words with a specific girl in mind. It only came out later, for instance, how many songs – *Things We Said Today, And I Love Her, You Won't See Me, We Can Work It Out and Here, There And Everywhere* among them – that Paul McCartney wrote about his relationship with then-girlfriend Jane Asher. To the general public, in those early years, The Beatles were young, single and free.

There are many women who figured in the lives of The Beatles during their lifetime. Some are main players, the ones that the four members either married, became engaged to or simply enjoyed long-lasting relationships with, while others are walk-on extras, the wham-bam-thank-you-mam groupies, the one-night stands and strings-free affairs.

It was John Lennon who was, somewhat surprisingly given his wilder reputation, the first to tie the knot. Cynthia Powell was 17 when she enrolled at the Liverpool College Of Art, first setting eyes on Lennon when he joined a year later. At first, he would make ▶

Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr with partners Jane Asher and Maureen Starkey

JOHN AND CYNTHIA MARRIED AT MOUNT PLEASANT REGISTRY OFFICE IN LIVERPOOL ON 23 AUGUST 1962 WITH GEORGE HARRISON AND PAUL MCCARTNEY IN ATTENDANCE

When Cynthia told John Lennon that she was pregnant, he simply said, "There's only one thing for it Cyn, we'll have to get married"

fun of her comparative straightness, referring to her as 'Miss Prim' or 'Miss Hoylake', but eventually the faintly mismatched couple began dating. It would prove a tempestuous relationship. His jealousy could result in volcanic eruptions, as when he slapped her across the face (causing her head to hit a wall), after watching her dance with Stuart Sutcliffe. She left him for a short time after that, only returning after Lennon offered her a profuse apology.

"I used to be cruel to my woman, and physically – any woman," Lennon reflected in an interview with *Playboy* in 1980. "I was a hitter. I couldn't express myself and I hit. I fought men and I hit women… I am a violent man who has learned not to be violent and regrets his violence. I will have to be a lot older before I can face in public how I treated women as a youngster."

John and Cynthia married, in a low-key ceremony, at Mount Pleasant registry office in Liverpool on 23 August 1962 with George Harrison and Paul McCartney in attendance and Brian Epstein serving as best man. It was as far from a ritzy, tabloid-friendly showbiz wedding as it's possible to imagine – there were no photographers present and the registrar was continually drowned out by the sound of a pneumatic drill coming from outside the building.

The marriage produced a son – Julian – but Lennon's persistent womanising, plus his rapidly escalating drug use and an affair with conceptual artist Yoko Ono, whom he'd met in 1966 at the Indica Gallery in London, led to a messy divorce in November 1968.

Ono was seven years older than Lennon and first entered the Beatles story when she'd visited Paul McCartney at his London home, in the hope of obtaining a Lennon-McCartney song manuscript for a book her friend, composer John Cage, was working on.

Of all the Beatles partners, few have proved as divisive as Yoko Ono, for fans and for members of the group itself. Previous to Ono's arrival on the scene, girlfriends were rarely present in the studio while The Beatles recorded, but the pair's intense relationship meant that Lennon was now keen that his new partner be by his side at all times (including, apparently, toilet visits).

"We were both so excited about discovering each other, we didn't stop to think about anyone else's feelings, we just went ahead gung-ho," Ono said. "What we had was more precious than anything else."

Together, they recorded an album, a mostly unlistenable splurge of experimental hooey put down at Lennon's home studio at Kenwood titled *Unfinished Music No.1: Two Virgins*, an LP that provoked headlines for its controversial tackle-flashing cover art.

JOHN AND YOKO'S BED-INS

It was in 1969, in protest at the war that was raging in Vietnam at the time, that John Lennon and Yoko Ono held two week-long Bed-Ins For Peace, as they termed them, first at the Hilton Hotel in Amsterdam and then in the Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal.

The first Bed-In took place in the week after the couple's 20 March wedding. Setting up home in the presidential suite (Room 702) at the Amsterdam Hilton, the Lennons invited the world's media to observe their promotion of world peace.

Their second Bed-In was set for Montreal, where, during their seven-day stay at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel, they welcomed such names as acid guru Timothy Leary, comedians Tommy Smothers and Dick Gregory, DJ Murray The K, cartoonist Al Capp and poet Allen Ginsberg among others.

"We knew whatever we did was going to be in the papers. We decided to utilise the space we would occupy anyway, by getting married, with a commercial for peace," Lennon said later. "We would sell our product, which we call 'peace.' And to sell a product you need a gimmick, and the gimmick we thought was 'bed'. And we thought 'bed' because bed was the easiest way of doing it, because we're lazy."

John and Yoko with John's son Julian, whom he'd fathered with ex-wife Cynthia

JOHN ONO LENNON

John and Yoko were married on 20 March 1969 at the registry office in Gibraltar and spent their honeymoon in Amsterdam, in front of the world's cameras, campaigning with a week-long Bed-In For Peace. A month later, Lennon changed his name by deed poll, switching out Winston for Ono as his middle name.

Ono's continual presence in the studio for much of the recording of 'The White Album' resulted in her contributing backing vocals on *Birthday* and one line of lead vocals on John's *The Continuing Story Of Bungalow Bill*, marking the only occasion a woman sings lead vocal on any Beatles recording. The avant-garde sound collage, *Revolution 9*, although credited to Lennon–McCartney, was very much a Lennon and Ono concoction (with a soupçon of help from Harrison).

Though Ono contributed to various Lennon songs, she inspired surprisingly few (apart, rather obviously, from the 1969 track, *The Ballad Of John And Yoko*), whereas McCartney's primary romantic relationship through the 1960s had continued to inform his songwriting. He'd started dating Jane Asher in 1963, after the then-17-year-old had interviewed The Beatles at the Royal Albert Hall for the *Radio Times*. He was immediately ▶

transfixed with the sophisticated and well-connected teen actress.

The relationship between the porcelain-skinned, middle-class redhead and the working class mop-top would last five bumpy years, until their engagement was sensationally broken off when Asher discovered her fiancé's affair with a 23-year-old American named Francie Schwartz (Asher had discovered the two of them in bed after she returned to London from an acting job in Bristol earlier than expected).

After his split with Asher, McCartney asked Schwartz to move into his Cavendish Avenue home, while also securing her a job at Apple. Later, she spilled the secrets of her affair in an autobiography, *Body Count*. Asher, on the other hand, has rarely spoken publicly of her time with McCartney, and Macca has, in turn, been wary of invoking Asher's name too often in the story of The Beatles: "She's never gone into print about our relationship, whilst everyone on Earth has sold their story," he said in the *Anthology* book. "So I'd feel weird being the one to kiss and tell."

Linda Eastwood was on a photography job in London snapping musicians when she first met McCartney at a Georgie Fame concert at the Bag O'Nails club in Soho on 15 May 1967. She would cross paths with him again just four days later at the launch party for *Sgt Pepper* at Brian Epstein's house in Belgravia, before flying back to New York. They flirted a little, but nothing came of it.

It would be another year before they'd touch base again, in New York this time, where McCartney and John Lennon had flown to inaugurate Apple Records. A few months later, McCartney invited Eastman to London. When she arrived, they went to his home, where they spent the evening. "He must have been really happy that night," said one of the fans who often loitered outside his house. "He sat on the windowsill with his acoustic guitar and sang *Blackbird* to us from his upstairs room."

McCartney and Eastman wed in a small civil ceremony in Marylebone on 12 March 1969, just a week before Lennon and Ono would tie the knot. The press would prove as hostile to Eastman as they were with Ono, and both have suffered terrible, ill-founded abuse from Beatles fans over the decades for supposedly having contributed to the band's break-up. "She got the same kind of insults, hatred, absolute garbage thrown at her for no reason whatsoever other than she fell in love with Paul McCartney," Lennon would later say.

Paul McCartney's girlfriend between 1963 and 1968, Jane Asher was a major influence on his lifestyle and songwriting

MAUREEN AND PATTIE

All told, the wives and girlfriends of George Harrison and Ringo Starr avoided much of the attention given to the partners of the band's main songwriters. Nobody blamed Maureen Starkey for the disintegration of The Beatles, and few but the hardcore would have even been aware of the existence, in George Harrison's life, of the model Pattie Boyd.

Then again, every Beatles fan would at least clocked her at one point, even if they didn't know that she would one day inspire not just four Beatles tracks (*I Need You, If I Needed Someone, Something* and *For You Blue*), but two of the most famous songs in rock (specifically Eric Clapton's *Layla* and *Wonderful Tonight*). Boyd first encountered The Beatles when, then 19, she was cast as a starstruck schoolgirl in their 1964 flick, *A Hard Day's Night*. Harrison was instantly smitten with the cherubic-faced blonde, who had already modelled for many ▶

Paul and Linda were married in a small civil ceremony on 12 March 1969

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PORCELAIN-SKINNED, MIDDLE-CLASS REDHEAD AND THE WORKING CLASS MOP-TOP WOULD LAST FIVE BUMPY YEARS

“

> HARRISON WAS INSTANTLY SMITTEN WITH THE CHERUBIC-FACED BLONDE, WHO HAD ALREADY MODELLED FOR MANY OF THE DECADE'S MOST ICONIC PHOTOGRAPHERS

ALL YOU NEED IS SELF-LOVE

The Beatles have always been known as a tight unit, but few guessed quite how intimate some the members were with each other until McCartney divulged to Barry Miles for the *Many Years From Now* book the fact that he and John Lennon once masturbated together.

"What it was," he elaborated to *GQ* last year, "was over at John's house, and it was just a group of us. And instead of just getting roaring drunk and partying, we were all just in these chairs, and the lights were out, and somebody started masturbating, so we all did."

As he explained, as each closed their eyes to concentrate, other members of the group (said to be John's friends from art college) would be encouraged to shout out a name to… inspire the others.

"We were just, 'Brigitte Bardot!' 'Whoo!'" McCartney continued, "and then everyone would thrash a bit more. I think it was John sort of said, 'Winston Churchill!'"

It was, apparently, a one-off, however. "It wasn't a big thing," McCartney told the magazine. "But, you know, it was just the kind of thing you didn't think much of. Yeah, it's quite raunchy when you think about it. There's so many things like that from when you're a kid that you look back on and you're, 'Did we do that?' But it was good harmless fun. It didn't hurt anyone. Not even Brigitte Bardot."

of the decade's most iconic photographers, such as David Bailey, Terence Donovan and Brian Duffy.

They married at Epsom registry office on 21 January 1966, with McCartney as best man, but the marriage would be blighted by Harrison's repeated infidelities (McCarney later said of Harrison, "I don't want to say much, because he was a pal, but he liked the things that men like. He was red-blooded.") and they finally separated in 1974.

One of the various affairs Harrison had during their blustery marriage was with his bandmate's wife, Maureen Starkey. Ringo had begun stepping out with Liverpool hairdresser and Cavern Club regular Maureen Cox in 1963, marrying just two years later when she became pregnant with their first child. While Cox sometimes holidayed with Cynthia Lennon and Pattie Harrison, she was less at ease with the celebrity aspect of her husband's life than perhaps any of the other Beatle partners. "She was the least worldly of the Beatles womenfolk in the 60s," said Beatles' press officer Tony Barrow, describing her as "chirpy" with an "irreverent sense of humour" who "suited Ringo down to the ground."

George and Pattie Boyd. She would eventually leave him for Eric Clapton

Still, Ringo was no angel, and his womanising was as much a factor in their eventual divorce as his bandmate's affair. According to super-groupie Chris O'Dell (who had a fling with Ringo), Harrison admitted he had been sleeping with Maureen at the drummer's kitchen table, confessing, "You know, Ringo, I'm in love with your wife." Starr shrugged and replied, "Better you than someone we don't know."

Ringo and Maureen would divorce in 1975. Both he and Harrison would eventually wed again after the collapse of their first marriages, successfully this time, Ringo with future Bond girl and actress Barbara Bach and George with A&M Records secretary Olivia Arias. McCartney's marriage to Linda ended only with her death from cancer in 1998 (Macca would claim that the couple had spent only 10 days apart, when he was arrested and jailed in Tokyo under marijuana charges). A subsequent marriage to model Heather Mills produced a daughter, Beatrice, but ended acrimonious after just six years. He married American Nancy Shevell in 2011, after being introduced by Shevell's cousin, the veteran broadcaster Barbara Walters.

Lennon had one well-documented wobble during his marriage to Yoko Ono, when he left her, on Ono's suggestion it seems, for her assistant May Pang. Within 18, mostly sozzled months, however, it was over and he went back to Ono, with whom he'd spend his last years.

Lennon and Harrison's widows are now the representatives of their late husbands on the world stage, regularly appearing alongside Paul and Ringo at Beatles-inspired events such as the premiere of Martin Scorsese's George Harrison documentary or the launch of the Beatles *Rock Band* video game.

Pattie Boyd once told Beatles biographer Hunter Davies that the four Beatles had a bond that neither she nor any other wife could penetrate. Maybe, but those women provided a bedrock for the band, a safe haven from the head-swirling madness of Beatlemania and the oppressive intimacy of the band dynamic. They were, in many ways, the heart behind the songs we love. ●

Mr and Mrs Ringo Starr. Maureen Starkey would eventually marry Isaac Tigrett, co-founder of the Hard Rock Cafe

ROLL UP, ROLL UP

SKETCHY BUT DELIGHTFUL, THE BEATLES' RETRO-PSYCH TRAVELOGUE WAS MET WITH WIDESPREAD PUZZLEMENT ON ITS TRANSMISSION IN 1967. JOHNNY SHARP, HOWEVER, IS DEFINITELY ON THE BUS

People sometimes talk of artists having an 'imperial phase' – and if there was ever a time when The Beatles could pretty much do what they liked, the summer of 1967 was surely it.

So when Paul McCartney, inspired by tales he'd heard of Ken Kesey's freewheeling, bus-living tribe of Merry Pranksters in the US, suggested that the band should travel round the country in the company of a coachload of eccentrics, oddballs and groovy fellow travellers, recording their 'magical' adventures on film, no one was about to stop them.

The idea, like a fair few Beatles notions from this era, was based on childhood memories of northern culture infused with acid-tinged surrealism, communal vibes and anarchic hippy mischief. Paul remembered the popular phenomenon of mini-vacation 'mystery tours' as a child in the 1940s and 50s: "You'd get on a bus, and you didn't know where you were going, but nearly always it was Blackpool…" he told biographer Barry Miles. "Generally there's a crate of ale in the boot of the coach and you sing lots of songs… rather romantic and slightly surreal."

Paul liked the idea of the band making their own movie – not a studio production like *A Hard Day's Night* or *Help!* – but a DIY affair. He'd been enjoying larking around with a home movie camera after paying Jane Asher a surprise visit on her 21st birthday in Denver, Colorado, on 5 April 1967, and filming her there.

On a flight back from the United States a week later, he began scribbling down lyrics for the title song on a stewardess's notepad, and drew a sketch – a kind of pie chart-meets-60-minute-clock – to plot where in the movie various happenings might take place.

After returning to the studio in London, Paul put the Mystery Tour idea to the band, and he and John worked up the EP and movie's title song. The pair's fascination with fairgrounds and circuses was evident once more, and of course, "Roll up! Roll up!" now had an extra layer of hash-infused meaning, as did the idea of this trip "waiting to take you away". ▶

Magical Mystery Tour **caused outrage in 1967, but more recently has been compared to the works of Luis Buñuel and Monty Python**

IN THE WEEKS THAT FOLLOWED, WHILE MIXING *SGT PEPPER*, THE BAND BATTED ABOUT IDEAS FOR THE FILM, FLICKING THROUGH CASTING BOOKS FROM THEATRICAL AGENCIES

All dressed up at the Magical Mystery Tour Fancy Dress Party, 21 December 1967

In the weeks that followed, while mixing *Sgt Pepper*, the band batted about ideas for the film, flicking through casting books from theatrical agencies. When they stumbled upon the large lady who would end up playing Ringo's Aunt Jessica, John hooted, "She's four times the size of you, Ring!"

Yet despite their enthusiasm, the project was left on the backburner as they focused on creating a backing track for the recording of global BBC simulcast *Our World*, the centrepiece of which was, of course, the world's biggest pop group performing *All You Need Is Love*.

After that global happening added extra momentum to the summer of love, there were other extra-curricular distractions to fill our heroes' expanding heads. John, Paul and George went to Greece with 'Magic' Alex Mardas to discuss the option of buying an island out there and creating some sort of artistic commune. George then went to LA to hang out with Ravi Shankar, Ringo attended the birth of his son Jason in London, and then, of course, the plan to attend a seminar by the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in North Wales was formulated.

CARRY ON REGARDLESS

Despite the bold nature of the *Magical Mystery Tour* project, by the time they returned to it in early September, according to several accounts, not everyone

THE SCENES THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

If the *Magical Mystery Tour* movie was always intended to meld fiction and reality, then there were at least a couple of real-life episodes during the trip that, if properly filmed, surely could have made for entertaining viewing.

On day two, for instance, the decision was taken to head to the annual fair at Widecombe-In-The-Moor, but thanks to the driver's ill-advised short cut, the coach drove over a narrow bridge at the village of Spitchwick, and got stuck. John Lennon got so frustrated he jumped out and started angrily tearing the stickers off the side of the bus, and then it rained, causing the psychedelic paint to run down the sides of the vehicle, as a huge traffic jam built up behind it.

"They should have got out and filmed that because it was hysterically funny," said journalist Miranda Ward. In fact they did take some footage, but presumably felt that the frayed tempers and temporary suspension of universal peace and love wouldn't quite have fitted with the carefree vibe they were aiming for.

Later on, the one performance most fans would have killed to see came on the last of three days the band spent in Newquay. Spencer Davis was on holiday nearby and invited the band for a drink at the Tywarnhayle Inn in nearby Perranporth. Paul and Ringo took him up on the offer, and when they walked in to disbelieving looks from the locals, Paul waved hello to the patrons and announced that he'd be their piano player for the evening. He led a singalong of "every pub standard" imaginable, according to Miranda Ward, but refused her repeated requests to play *Yellow Submarine*, despite launching into the opening bars of it on several occasions then veering off into another number. Once again, why no one thought to film this magical happening for the movie remains a pressing question.

was brimming with confidence regarding the band's future. There was at least one highly understandable reason for that. The band's trip to Bangor over the August Bank Holiday weekend had been cut short following the news of Brian Epstein's death. All bets were off regarding the band's next steps now they had lost their manager and mentor. Still, like many bereaved individuals before and since, Paul McCartney elected to throw himself back into his work. So he arranged a band meeting.

"The meeting at his house came only a few days after [Brian's death]," said the band's former press officer Tony Barrow, "and a lot of people thought it was rather callous that Paul seemed to be putting work before everything else so soon." But Barrow explained that Paul feared that in the wake of Brian's death, the band would "clear off to India" to the Maharishi's retreat (as there was talk of doing after the Bangor visit was cut short) and "never come back together as a working band".

McCartney cracked the whip, and after picking young filmmaker Peter Theobald to oversee the filming, he insisted they would need to start filming just five days hence, by which time a cast and film crew would have to be picked, along with a fully-painted coach, and a route planned to their destination, Cornwall.

Paul wanted to avoid the laborious process they'd experienced making their previous two films, but the lack of preparation and planning would inevitably impact on the end result.

ON BOARD

Passengers gathered for the *Magical Mystery Tour* itself at 10.45am on Monday, 11 September 1967 in Allsop Place, near London's Planetarium – the location chosen precisely because it was a popular spot for tourist coaches to park up.

The lack of planning was immediately evident when the coach took two hours to turn up from the garage, with paint still dripping wet, while Paul and Mal Evans had to make a dash into Soho to buy uniforms for the driver and courier. They were quickly coming to understand the challenges of working without a manager. From that moment on, many on the bus remained unaware of which aspects of proceedings were real and which were being acted for the movie.

John, George and Ringo were picked up by the bus near their homes in Surrey, conveniently situated *en route* to the west country. But even when they got on board, there was a sense of ambiguity as to whether they were there as themselves or faintly fictionalised characters. The drummer certainly seemed to straddle the two personae, and indeed the movie keeps returning to ▶

In 1978, the film was parodied by The Rutles as the *Tragical History Tour*

'Richard B Starkey', and his aunt Jessica, who, we learn in the film's first few scenes, are "always arguing about one thing or another". The pair's bickering was largely improvised, adding to the confusion.

On several occasions they stopped at a chip shop or services and no one knew if it was the setting for the next scene or a snack break. The impromptu itinerary wasn't entirely fictional either. On the first night, they arrived at the Royal Hotel in Teignmouth, Devon, hungry and tired with only a few sandwiches available for the huge entourage – the hotel, it transpired, had only taken the booking that morning.

UNDER SEIGE

Meanwhile, word of the band's presence in the area had already spread, so by the time the coach arrived at Newquay's Atlantic Hotel on day two, the place was under siege. The policeman featured putting his helmet back on in the crowd in the movie's opening scenes ended up that way in a vain attempt to control the mayhem, and he was later disciplined after his superiors spotted him on a poster for the movie in a record shop.

Thankfully, the band were later able to take advantage of their roving audience, roping in local female fans to don bikinis and act as extras for scenes filmed at the Atlantic Hotel's swimming pool.

Filming continued the following week, with the Raymond Revue Bar hosting the Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah ▶

Paul McCartney poses with a cow at West Malling Air Station in Maidstone, Kent

"I'm not sure whose idea *Magical Mystery Tour* was," McCartney has said. "It could have been mine, but I'm not sure whether I want to take the blame for it!

> ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS THEY STOPPED AT A CHIP SHOP OR SERVICES AND NO ONE KNEW IF IT WAS THE SETTING FOR THE NEXT SCENE OR A SNACK BREAK

Band's *Death Cab For Cutie* performance, and then the rest of the filming was done during six days at a military air base in Kent, including the 'Sergeant Major' scene and the performances of *I Am The Walrus*, and the showstopping song-and-dance routine to *Your Mother Should Know*. But the 'tour' itself was all over in reality – and relatively little of the original 'tour' footage was used in the final movie.

Indeed, the footage for *The Fool On The Hill* was shot afterwards in Nice and the surreal scenes that accompanied *Flying* were aerial shots taken over Greenland and the Hebridean Islands, which were originally outtakes from Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, a movie *MMT* producer Dennis O'Dell had worked on as assistant producer.

MAGICALLY MYSTIFIED

One hell of a hotch-potch, then. And critics and public certainly saw it that way, to put it politely, when the finished movie was broadcast at 8.35pm on Boxing Day, 1967, at a time usually reserved for mass appeal, family-friendly entertainment. The black and white broadcast deadened the colourful psychedelia that seeped throughout the film, and such was the backlash that Paul himself was moved to make something of an apology: "If we goofed, then we goofed… we'll know better next time."

> THE SURREAL SCENES THAT ACCOMPANIED *FLYING* WERE AERIAL SHOTS TAKEN OVER GREENLAND AND THE HEBRIDEAN ISLANDS, WHICH WERE ORIGINALLY OUTTAKES FROM *2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY*

Still, he couldn't help comparing it to other staples of the festive schedules: "I mean, you couldn't call the Queen's speech a gas, either, could you?"

Such was the reception that plans for American networks to pick it up were shelved. Many fans in the US

The Beatles pose with the *Magical Mystery Tour* cast

The Magical Mystery Tour bus stuck on a bridge near the village of Spitchwick in Devon

Magical Mystery Tour carries a 62% approval rating at the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes

remained completely unaware of the movie's existence, in fact, for several years until it received a belated theatrical release in 1974.

The six-track EP, meanwhile, released two weeks previously, found a more favourable audience. And perhaps inevitably, it's the music that saves the movie – just how bad can any piece of film be if it includes performances of *I Am The Walrus* and *The Fool On The Hill*? It also has its fair share of playfully absurd scenes such as Victor Spinetti's gibberish-spouting Sergeant Major, Viv Stanshall and the Bonzos' turn in the strip club, and Lennon's spaghetti-shovelling waiter (included after he dreamt such a scenario during the filming), which seem very much in the style that Monty Python would trademark a couple of years later. It's perhaps no coincidence that the Python team considered showing it as a supporting short to go with their debut feature *Monty Python And The Holy Grail* in 1975.

Ahead of their time, then? Well, yes. For The Beatles, it was always thus… ●

John Lennon *lead, harmony and backing vocals; wordless vocals (Flying); rhythm and acoustic guitars; acoustic and electric pianos, mellotron, Hammond organ, clavioline, harpsichord, banjo; harmonica and Jew's harp (The Fool On The Hill)*
Paul McCartney *lead, harmony and backing vocals; wordless vocals (Flying); bass and acoustic guitars, piano, mellotron, harmonium; recorder, penny whistle (The Fool On The Hill)*
George Harrison *lead, harmony and backing vocals; wordless vocals (Flying); lead, slide and acoustic guitars; Hammond organ, swarmandal, violin; harmonica (The Fool On The Hill)*
Ringo Starr *drums and percussion; backing vocals (Hello Goodbye); wordless vocals (Flying)*
George Martin *piano (Penny Lane and All You Need Is Love)*

MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

THE BEATLES' PSYCHEDELIC TV MOVIE WAS THEIR MOST DIVISIVE SMALL SCREEN APPEARANCE, YET ITS FREEWHEELING SOUNDTRACK WAS A FREEWHEELING BAG OF RICHES SAYS STEVE HARNELL

There's a ramshackle charm to *Magical Mystery Tour*'s Boxing Day televisual extravaganza that's matched by the hotchpotch brilliance of its accompanying soundtrack.

The TV movie was always intended as a loose, improvisational affair where narrative structure was dispensed with in favour of episodic vignettes. Its soundtrack, therefore, doesn't suffer from being populated with a grab bag of diverse tracks. In effect, the initial six-track double EP – later expanded to an 11-track album – was a premium clearing house for the band's post-*Sgt Pepper* output.

When *Magical Mystery Tour* was later released as a full album it boasted two trump cards within its ranks – arguably the greatest double A-side single of all time – *Strawberry Fields Forever* and *Penny Lane*, although laughably the 7" stalled at No.2 in the UK behind Engelbert Humperdinck's bloated *Release Me*. Both tracks predated sessions for *Sgt Pepper* and were originally proposed for a conceptual LP about the band's Liverpool childhood that ran out of steam. With the fake band concept essentially evaporating within its first two songs (the opening theme and *With A Little Help From My Friends*), *Sgt Pepper* would have been further improved by the appearance of ▶

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MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

TRACK BY TRACK

1 MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

Predominantly written by Paul, with a thumping backbeat by Ringo, McCartney shares lead vocals with Lennon on this vibrant call-to-arms. Interwoven into the action are car and coach noises from Abbey Road's sound effects archive and a four-person brass section. A delightfully eerie piano coda is dispensed with in only a few seconds; yet more proof of The Beatles' attention to fine detail and the fact they still had ideas to burn.

2 THE FOOL ON THE HILL

McCartney's poignant, introspective ballad was first auditioned to Lennon during recording sessions for *Sgt Pepper's With A Little Help From My Friends*. Written on piano, like many Paul songs from the period, the light-as-a-feather melody is one of his prettiest. The addition of a recorder solo (played by McCartney) also points to how far the band were now stretching away from the typical rock quartet set-up.

3 FLYING

A very rare credit to Harrison/Lennon/McCartney/Starkey, this loping three-chord shuffle in the key of C was originally titled *Aerial Tour Instrumental* and intended as an insert in the *Magical Mystery Tour* TV movie. The massed backing vocals add a disconcerting feel alongside Lennon's varispeed Mellotron. The song was finished in just two recording sessions at the conclusion of filming.

4 BLUE JAY WAY

Harrison's darkly psychedelic contribution to the *MMT* project has a dislocated atmosphere that's a poetic use of rather mundane beginnings. The track is named after a street in LA's Hollywood Hills where George stayed in August 1967 before visiting the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco. The lyrics explicitly allude to the jetlagged guitarist trying to stay awake while waiting for Beatles publicist Derek Taylor to join him.

5 YOUR MOTHER SHOULD KNOW

McCartney's fascination with old-timey music hall (influenced by his father Jim's love of the era) rises to the surface once again as The Beatles returned to Abbey Road after a two-month break following the creation of *All You Need Is Love*. It's another example of Paul's affinity with the generation of his parents, a brave and no doubt unfashionable position as such a key player amongst the youth movement.

6 I AM THE WALRUS

Lennon's masterful surrealist fantasy was, in part, a reaction to the way Beatle records were being picked away at by the intelligentsia and afforded unintended hidden meanings. The song's distinctive descending melody was partly inspired by a two-note police siren Lennon heard while playing piano at his Weybridge home and the song's wilfully nonsensical lyrics came together following a number of acid-fuelled weekends of imaginative exploration.

As Lennon languished out in Surrey's stockbroker belt and Harrison often went MIA during low-key contributions to Sgt Pepper, it was McCartney who had, by now, in all but name taken over as bandleader

Strawberry Fields Forever and *Penny Lane*, perhaps at the expense of the slight *Lovely Rita* and *Good Morning Good Morning*.

As Lennon languished out in Surrey's stockbroker belt and Harrison often went missing-in-action during low-key contributions to *Sgt Pepper*, it was McCartney who had, by now, in all but name taken over as bandleader, dreaming up the overarching themes for The Beatles' albums and providing much-needed dynamism.

Magical Mystery Tour was discussed with Brian Epstein before the manager's death and numerous songs – including its title track – were completed before the Beatle manager's untimely passing.

After The Beatles' retirement from live shows in the summer of 1966, their typical working pattern of concise, focused recording sessions followed by intensive promotion was now a thing of the past, replaced by a slow but sure amassing of material at Abbey Road sessions as and when they felt like it.

SECOND HOME

EMI's studio had become a second home to the band and the label waived fees for their goose that laid the golden egg, meaning the quartet merely had to find free time and a gap in Abbey Road's schedule before turning up to play.

The hugely decisive fact that their sessions were no longer 'against the clock' meant The Beatles were free to improvise, experiment and begin sessions with only the germ of an idea rather than the fully-formed demos that were a feature of their early days. Tracks were now written wholesale in the studio, unthinkable for their first handful of albums.

The TV movie may have misfired, but the accompanying LP was full of great singles and inspired experiments

McCartney's enthusiasm for the *Magical Mystery Tour* project was not initially shared by his colleagues. Widespread use of marijuana and LSD added to Harrison and Lennon's growing disaffection about being on the Beatles treadmill and reduced the urgency at which the foursome usually attacked recording sessions. While Ringo gamely got stuck into the work come what may, George and John's ▶

irritation with Paul's workaholic tendencies meant that McCartney's growing 'school-teacherly' dominance was having an isolating effect.

It was left to the bassist to keep The Beatles afloat by generating conceptual ideas for albums – something he continued to do right up to the *Get Back* sessions for final release *Let It Be* and studio swansong, *Abbey Road*.

Inspired by Ken Kesey's LSD disciples The Merry Pranksters, Paul's approach to recording sessions for what would become *Magical Mystery Tour* were often improvisational. When he reconvened the band on 25-27 April 1967 to record its title track he had just the briefest of outlines for guidance – a three-chord melody and the opening line of the song's lyrics. Preliminary sessions found Paul requesting his bandmates shout out phrases to slot into the song as they went along, bashing along with various percussion instruments to hand. The sessions were good-natured but, in particular, the distracted John and George had to be urged into getting into the spirit of things. As their initial, rather grudging attention began to wane, Paul adopted a more traditional bandleader role to snap them into focus to complete the backing track.

UNFAMILIAR SURROUNDING

When the band next gathered to record, it wasn't at their familiar surroundings of Abbey Road's Studio Two. Instead, they made their way across town to Olympic Sound Studios in Barnes – home turf of The Rolling Stones. The first Beatles song to be recorded and mixed outside Abbey Road, *Baby, You're A Rich Man* was a raucous singalong reportedly featuring Mick Jagger on backing vocals and multi-instrumentalist Brian Jones on oboe. Engineer Eddie Kramer, who worked extensively with Jimi Hendrix and Traffic that year, also played vibraphone on the track which featured a clavioline part from Lennon; the instrument was a monophonic keyboard and early forerunner of the synthesiser with John using it to mimic an Indian instrument known as a shehnai via some speeded-up studio trickery.

The track was worked up from the unfinished Lennon song *One Of The Beautiful People*, with Paul adding its singalong chorus. Lennon was inspired to write it after attending the now-legendary 14-Hour Technicolor Dream at Alexandra Palace, London, the event has since become an historic moment in the UK's Summer Of Love. Organised by close friend of The Beatles, Barry Miles, the epic charity show raised funds for counterculture newspaper *International Times* and eventually made its way into Peter Whitehead's documentary *Tonite Let's All Make Love In London*. Headlined by Pink Floyd, Lennon wandered through the event taking in the likes of The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown, The Pretty Things and The Move.

John attended the psychedelic extravaganza with friend John Dunbar, also enjoying a performance that night by Yoko Ono who he'd met the previous year at her private viewing in Dunbar's Indica Gallery.

The track's marching rhythm has been mentioned as being cribbed from contemporary single *Reach Out I'll Be There* but The Beatles' more laid-back druggy groove lacks the snappiness of the Four Tops' disciplined effort. Harrison argued that *Baby, You're A Rich Man*'s apparently simplistic vision had deeper meaning; that if we recognise our own beauty, we are all rich in our soul. Meanwhile, in typical Lennon fashion, his obsession with quietly (and sometimes not so quietly) subverting The Beatles' misaligned boy-next-door image came with a juvenile dig at Brian Epstein in the closing moments where he sings, "Baby, you're a rich fag Jew."

By The Beatles' early standards, 1967 was conducted at a reasonably leisurely pace. Yet their addition to the running order of the *Our World* global satellite broadcast to more than 400 million people left them with a tough deadline to hit. As the UK's representative, they had just a couple of weeks to

The *Magical Mystery Tour* movie was masterminded primarily by McCartney

7 HELLO GOODBYE

A simple game of word association by Paul with Beatles aide Alistair Taylor where the pair called out diametrically opposed lyrics at the star's home in St John's Wood generated this typically good-time song. Written on harmonium, it's considerably enlivened by a bewitching Hawaiian coda. Lennon was singularly unimpressed with Paul's simplistic effort, though, and enraged when the far superior *I Am The Walrus* was relegated to B-side status when the tracks became the band's first post-Epstein single release. He had a point, it's a rare strategic fail on the part of the band.

8 STRAWBERRY FIELDS FOREVER

Lennon's favourite self-penned Beatles song was inspired by the Salvation Army community home near his boyhood home in Woolton; he'd often wander through its grounds and attend summer fêtes there. When Lennon picked two takes recorded at different speeds and a semitone apart, George Martin pulled off one of pop music's most famous edits. Although very much a showcase for John, Paul's Mellotron accompaniment, George's slide guitar solo and Ringo's intuitive drum fills add wonderful nuance. John's cries of "Cranberry sauce!" atop of a rocking drum track after the false fade are evidence of a band still in love with the joy of musical creation.

9 PENNY LANE

One of Paul's most finely-observed and detailed narrative songs, almost on a par with the evocative *Eleanor Rigby*, *Penny Lane* dates back to the autumn of 1966. Furthermore, its title was jotted down by John during sessions for *Rubber Soul* among other Liverpool place names ripe for poetic exploration. It was Paul, though, who saw the idea through to fruition. Packed full of detail including the fire engine's bell, a descending bassline to illustrate the banker slowly lowering himself into the barber's chair and a dirty in-joke ("fish and finger pie"), this is quintessential Paul.

10 BABY, YOU'RE A RICH MAN

Lennon's way with a snappy slogan – "How does it feel to be one of the beautiful people?" – immediately grabs our attention here. Recorded at Olympic Studios, it was the first song The Beatles laid down outside of Abbey Road. It's also their first pure groove track, eschewing traditional structure but in a less experimental way than the groundbreaking *Tomorrow Never Knows*.

11 ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE

The band had less than two weeks to come up with a song for the *One World* international TV broadcast after learning from Epstein that they'd be representing the UK to over 400 million viewers. George called *All You Need Is Love* "a subtle piece of PR for God". The intro includes *La Marseillaise*, there's a dash of *In The Mood* in the outro. Martin also integrated a half-paced slice of *Greensleeves* at the end.

As the UK's representative, they had just a couple of weeks to come up with what became *All You Need Is Love*, another example of Lennon's gift for attention-grabbing sloganeering

come up with what became *All You Need Is Love*, another example of Lennon's gift for attention-grabbing sloganeering. Work on the track was undertaken at Olympic Studios and Abbey Road with its orchestral arrangement added just two days before the show's transmission on 25 June 1967. Although harsh critics have dismissed it as hack work, it's undeniable that *All You Need Is Love* perfectly fitted the brief of a TV broadcast designed to bring the world together. An expression of positivity and inclusion, Lennon is arguing that his insights into spirituality are available to everyone if their hearts are open to it; the band's newfound awareness was not purely the preserve of millionaire rock ▶

Lennon showcased one of his most accomplished songs on the *MMT* album

stars or dedicated gurus. George Martin provides numerous production flourishes including an intro utilising a dash of *La Marseillaise* as well as nods to *Greensleeves* and Glenn Miller's *In The Mood*. Paul replies in kind with his own freestyle addition of a bar of *She Loves You* at the end.

PIECEMEAL SESSIONS

Magical Mystery Tour's piecemeal sessions are further evidenced by the two-month break The Beatles took following the taping of *All You Need Is Love*. The band then reconvened at the end of August for Paul's jaunty *Your Mother Should Know*, its title swiped from a line in the screenplay to Shelagh Delaney's play *A Taste Of Honey* (Morrissey later mined the same play for numerous Smiths lyrics). With no structured sessions booked for recording, The Beatles were once again forced to leave Abbey Road, this time for Chappell Recording Studios in W1; their usual home in St John's Wood was booked up. The song is also notable for the fact it was the last recording session undertaken before the death of Brian Epstein, the band's manager heard playbacks of the track at the studios. Within days, he was dead. Although further takes were made at Abbey Road, McCartney – the song's sole composer – preferred the original Chappell Studios version.

The whole *MMT* project could have been derailed by the death of Brian Epstein on 27 August 1967, but four days later McCartney convened a band meeting at his home to take stock and map a way forward. A sombre Lennon was pessimistic of their chances post-Epstein; sensing a watershed moment, McCartney cannily allowed their next recording session to focus on Lennon's masterpiece-in-waiting *I Am The Walrus*.

In a 1980 *Playboy* interview, Lennon explained his inspiration: "It's from *The Walrus And The Carpenter*; *Alice In Wonderland*. To me, it was a beautiful poem. It never dawned on me that Lewis Carroll was commenting on the capitalist system. Later, I went back and looked at it and realised that the walrus was the bad guy in the story and the carpenter was the good guy. I thought, oh, shit, I picked the wrong guy. I should have said, 'I am the carpenter'. But that wouldn't have been the same, would it?"

The whole *MMT* project could have been derailed by the death of Brian Epstein, but four days later McCartney convened a band meeting at his home to take stock and map a way forward

Harrison's contribution to *Magical Mystery Tour* is perhaps The Beatles' most sinister psychedelic track. Once again influenced by the drones of Indian music, *Blue Jay Way* was recorded over three sessions in September and October. A session on 7 September was followed the next day when The Beatles cut underrated instrumental *Flying*, their first non-vocal outing that made it to release since *Cry For A Shadow* way back in 1961.

Paul, though, could still be relied upon to bring a lightness of touch to proceedings and his plaintive *The Fool On The Hill* lifted spirits by the end of September. Was the reference to the Fool influenced by tarot cards? Like the *I Ching*, the Summer Of Love had seen a revival in interest in tarot readings.

If McCartney had garnered some brownie points in the eyes of Lennon for restarting recording sessions with *I Am The Walrus*, they evaporated into rancour when the song was relegated to the B-side of the upbeat, yet far less substantial *Hello Goodbye*. Four sessions in October and November were required to nail Paul's infectious but featherlight track. The similarly nursery rhyme-indebted *Here We Go Round The Mulberry Bush* by Traffic was at one point considered for inclusion on *MMT*'s soundtrack but dismissed in favour of Paul's hit single. ●

George Harrison was granted only one song on the album (though he co-composed *Flying*)

EASTERN PROMISE

THE BEATLES' LINKS TO MAHARISHI MAHESH YOGI AND THEIR TRIP TO HIS ASHRAM IN RISHIKESH WOULD HAVE A PROFOUND EFFECT ON THE BAND, FOR BETTER AND FOR WORSE... BY STEVE HARNELL

The Beatles' interest in Eastern philosophy variously ranged from a fleeting flirtation to lifelong devotion. Key to their spiritual journey would be their brief immersion in the world of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the Indian guru who popularised Transcendental Meditation on a global scale.

The band and partners (with the exception of Ringo and Maureen who had just given birth to their second child, Jason) first encountered the Maharishi on 24 August 1967 at his lecture at the Hilton Hotel in Park Lane, London. Paul remembers having previously seen the Maharishi on Granada TV's *People And Places* programme on numerous occasions over the years presenting a simple recipe for a better life – 20 minutes of meditation in the morning followed by a further 20 minutes at night.

Shortly afterwards, the band were up in Bangor, attending a 10-day seminar by the Maharishi at the University Of North Wales. John and Cynthia even considered seeing the Maharishi in Libya, but the much more convenient option of a train ride from Euston to the Welsh city won out.

However, even that simple journey has since gone down in Beatle folklore. In the crush of bodies to make the train – a huge crowd saw the band off in London – Cynthia was left behind, unable to hold on to John in the scramble for the train door as a policeman stood in her way believing her to be just another over-amorous fan; "Tell him you're with us! Tell him to let you on!" shouted John to no avail. Cynthia was left on the platform with her bags at her feet, tears streaming down her face.

Cynthia later explained: "I was crying because the incident seemed symbolic of what was happening to my marriage. John was on the train, speeding into the future and I was left behind." She would make it eventually, driven up to Bangor the following day by Beatles' aide Neil Aspinall. In the *Anthology* book, George deadpans: "Mick Jagger was also there. He was always lurking around in the background trying to find out what was happening. Mick never wanted ▶

Indian mystic Maharishi Mahesh Yogi had considerable influence over The Beatles with his transcendental teachings

The Beatle and the Stone: Paul McCartney and Mick Jagger en route to Bangor for a seminar on Transcendental Meditation

> JOHN AND GEORGE MADE HIGH-PROFILE APPEARANCES ON DAVID FROST'S CHAT SHOW TO PROMOTE THE BENEFITS OF TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION

to miss out on what the Fabs were doing." Such was the import attributed to The Beatles' trip to experience the Maharishi up close, a press conference was hastily arranged – and one where the band denounced drugs in favour of mind-expanding meditation. But their participation was cut short on 27 August following news of the tragic death of Brian Epstein, a stricken John Lennon looks ashen-faced as he processes the information with an assembled gaggle of reporters.

Once the band navigated the immediate implications of Epstein's death, they planned a trip to the Maharishi's training HQ in Rishikesh, India, in October 1967, only

John Lennon with the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in Bangor, where The Beatles first heard of the death of Brian Epstein

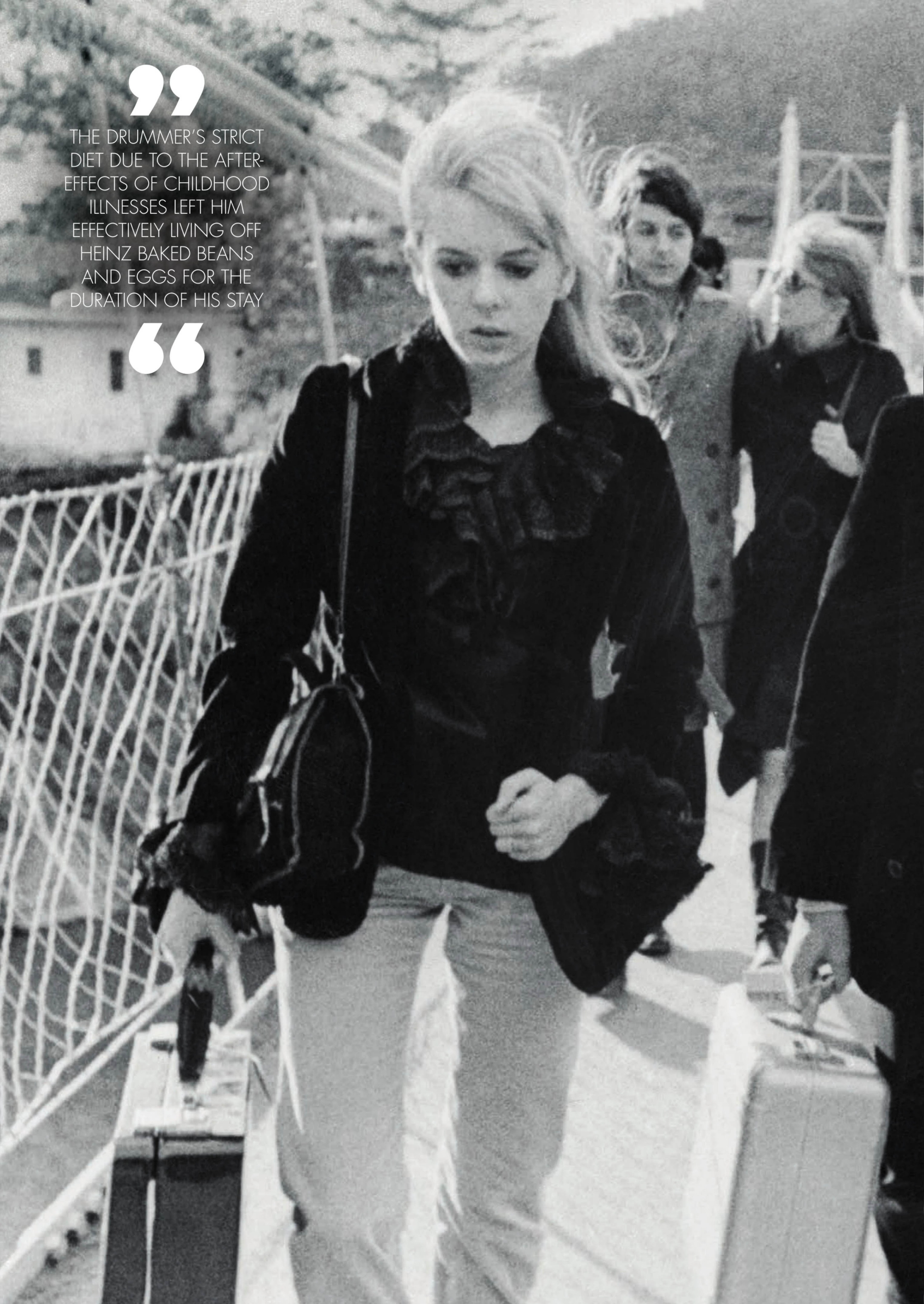
A tearful Cynthia Lennon at Euston Station after missing the train to Bangor, 25 August 1967

to be postponed at McCartney's request to finish the *Magical Mystery Tour* project.

John and George – who bought into the Maharishi's philosophy more than the rest of the band – made high-profile appearances on David Frost's chat show to promote the benefits of Transcendental Meditation (TM) and the pair also met up with the guru once again in December at a UNICEF benefit show in Paris.

With such a visibly close connection to The Beatles, the Maharishi's star soon began to rise – *Life* magazine ran a cover story on TM and declared 1968 'The Year Of The Guru'. Yet controversy was never too far away from the giggling sage – the Western media regarded him with suspicion or, in the case of *Private Eye* magazine, outright derision; the satirical publication dubbed him 'Veririchi Lotsamoney Yogi Bear'.

Even those around the band were concerned that the Maharishi was exploiting his Beatles connections for financial gain; interim band manager Peter Brown claimed the guru had begun negotiations with US network ABC to make a television special featuring the group. Brown even went so far as dragging Harrison and McCartney to Malmo, Sweden, to face down the guru and put accusations he was using the band for ▶



THE DRUMMER'S STRICT DIET DUE TO THE AFTER-EFFECTS OF CHILDHOOD ILLNESSES LEFT HIM EFFECTIVELY LIVING OFF HEINZ BAKED BEANS AND EGGS FOR THE DURATION OF HIS STAY

Paul and Ringo, with partners Linda and Maureen, arrive at Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's Transcendental Meditation Centre

MAHARISHI MAHESH YOGI – THE BEFORE AND AFTERLIFE

A disciple of Swami Brahmananda Saraswati, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi brought Transcendental Meditation to a global audience, spreading the word via world tours from 1959 onwards. From the outset, though, he remained a divisive figure, often criticised by traditional Indian sages and gurus for propounding a simple, accessible technique, and for abandoning traditional concepts of suffering and concentration as the paths to spiritual enlightenment. His association with The Beatles may have ended abruptly, but in later years George Harrison regretted listening to unsubstantiated rumours about the guru of sexual impropriety. Harrison became a supporter of the Maharishi's Natural Law Party and played a benefit concert to raise funds. McCartney also reconnected with the guru, visiting him with daughter Stella at his latter-day headquarters in Vlodrop, Netherlands, in 2007. The Maharishi died a year later.

his own gain to him in person. The Maharishi waved them away with a giggle: "He's not a modern man," countered George. "He just doesn't understand these things."

The Beatles were implacable in their support of the guru and, after George further explored his fascination with Indian music following recording sessions in Bombay for his soundtrack album *Wonderwall Music* and the London-recorded *The Inner Light*, which eventually surfaced as the B-side to Lennon's *Across The Universe*, all four members of the band made their way to India in February 1968.

TWO FACTIONS

Tellingly, the entourage was split into two factions. Lennon with wife Cynthia and Harrison with Pattie Boyd and sister Jenny were first to make the trip on the 15th, followed by a 150-mile six-hour taxi ride to Rishikesh. Four days later, McCartney and Jane Asher joined Starr and wife Maureen on the same trip, arriving at the ashram via a walk over the picturesque Lakshman Jhula footbridge that bestrode the River Ganges.

Starr's visit always appeared fraught. He immediately requested that aide Mal Evans should take him to a doctor following a reaction to his inoculation, while the drummer's strict diet due to the after-effects of childhood illnesses left him effectively living off Heinz baked beans and eggs for the duration of his stay. An overnight stay to sort Ringo's medical needs meant their group eventually joined John and George's on 20 February.

By then, the TM course run by the Maharishi had already been underway for three weeks, there was little more than a month left before it ended on 25 April. The band's privacy was paramount and a retinue of reporters were mostly barred from the gated compound.

Other celebrities also made the trip, including singer-songwriter Donovan, who taught George and Paul an acoustic fingerpicking style that would be much in evidence on the resulting 'White Album'; Beach Boy Mike Love, then and now in pursuit of some much-needed spiritual guidance; and actors Jerry Stovin and Tom Simcox (Lennon would reportedly accuse the latter of having an affair with Cynthia, despite at one point mulling over the idea of inviting his new artist friend Yoko Ono on the trip). Amid much publicity surrounding her recent separation from husband Frank Sinatra, actress Mia Farrow joined the ashram with sister Prudence.

George Harrison, Ringo Starr and Pattie Boyd at a party to celebrate Harrison's 25th birthday, 25 February 1968

The Beatles' four bungalows came with electric heating, running water, toilets and English-style furniture, which was far more palatial than other accommodation offered to guests as the Maharishi did his best to roll out the red carpet treatment to the foursome. Each band member also had their own bespoke meditation dome.

Settling into a simple routine, the band spent their days meditating or attending lectures delivered by the Maharishi upon a flower-strewn platform in the main auditorium. Allowing The Beatles to play catch-up following their three-week delay in starting the course, the guru also gave them private lessons.

George Harrison, followed by Lennon, threw themselves into their meditative challenges, although John's marital rift with Cynthia was growing by the day. Cynthia was saddened at his request after a fortnight to sleep in a separate room arguing that he could only meditate properly alone. Little did she know that John was making daily trips to the local post office to check for telegrams from Yoko Ono. Cynthia's wish

SETTLING INTO A SIMPLE ROUTINE, THE BAND SPENT THEIR DAYS MEDITATING OR ATTENDING LECTURES DELIVERED BY THE MAHARISHI UPON A FLOWER-STREWN PLATFORM IN THE MAIN AUDITORIUM

that the couple would rediscover their "lost closeness" would not come to pass.

With so much time to think, when the band weren't meditating or beating away wild monkeys and crows intent on stealing their vegetarian meals in the communal dining hall, the band strummed acoustic guitars and stockpiled a mass of new material; meanwhile, Ringo accompanied them with tablas bought for him by Harrison in Delhi.

BURST OF ACTIVITY

The bulk of 'The White Album' was conceived during their Rishikesh stay with more material still not seeing the light of day until many years later. Estimates at the number of songs The Beatles wrote during their Indian retreat range from 30 to 48 – whatever the tally, it amounts to the most productive burst of activity in their career. The stripped-back acoustic birth of these new songs found them relinquishing psychedelia to take in material inspired by their natural surroundings as much as their imaginations.

While songs poured out of John and Paul, devoted student George kept his writing to a minimum, preferring to concentrate on the spiritual lessons at hand. The ever-competitive workaholic Paul, who only bought into ▶

THE RISHIKESH STASH

The Beatles couldn't cram all of their Rishikesh work onto 'The White Album'. Instead, numerous tracks saw the light of day years later. Here are five of the best.

1) Child Of Nature (Lennon)
"On the road to Rishikesh, I was dreaming more or else" sings John here, later retaining the melody but radically reworking its lyrics for *Jealous Guy*.

2) Circles (Harrison)
George's exploration of reincarnation was never formally recorded by The Beatles but appeared on 1982 solo LP *Gone Troppo*.

3) Junk (McCartney)
Typically pretty fingerpicked McCartney whimsy, *Junk* failed to make the cut on 'The White Album' or *Abbey Road* despite being offered up for inclusion. Paul then placed it on his eponymous 1970 debut solo effort.

4) Look At Me (Lennon)
The acoustic fingerpicking technique picked up from Donovan during their Rishikesh stay informs the arrangement of this delicate Lennon song that was a pause for breath on the powerful Primal Scream lacerations of his Plastic Ono Band debut album of 1970.

5) Sour Milk Sea (Harrison)
The Quiet One's acoustic demo was worked up into a heavy rock gem by Jackie Lomax and an all-star band boasting George, Paul, Ringo, Eric Clapton and super-session keys man Nicky Hopkins.

George, Ringo, John and Paul, plus Jane Asher, Maureen Starkey and Pattie Boyd, celebrate George's quarter century

The Beatles in India, March 1968. Also present are Beatles roadie Mal Evans, Prudence Farrow, Jenny Boyd and Beach Boy Mike Love

the TM concept up to a point, naturally had his eye on the next Beatle release; George and Paul clashed on their differing outlooks. "We're not fucking here to do the next album!" raged Harrison. "We're here to meditate!"

While Harrison was happy to play the long game, Lennon's quest for spiritual truth was typically impatient. During one sightseeing helicopter ride with the Maharishi, John made a desperate scramble to take the last remaining seat on the chopper. When quizzed about his eagerness to sit beside the guru, Lennon later revealed: "I thought he might slip me the Answer."

Ringo and Maureen would be first to leave the ashram on 1 March after just 10 days. The pair missed their children, hated the insects and Starr's allergies left him struggling to find decent food to eat. McCartney and Asher followed a fortnight later, with Paul arguing he'd always planned a month-long stay rather than the open-ended trip undertaken by George and John.

McCartney's departure would mark the arrival of 'Magic' Alex Mardas, a self-appointed electronics expert who would be outspoken in his criticism of the Maharishi. His observations about the guru's accountants who were always at his side and the reported revelation that the Indian sage had asked for a quarter of the profits from The Beatles' next album's profits to be placed in a Swiss bank account rang alarm bells with Lennon. Could this have been Mardas' way of securing his place in The Beatles' inner sanctum when he perceived his position to be under threat from the Maharishi?

And the controversy took an even darker turn when Mia Farrow accused the Maharishi of making a pass at her during a private puja ceremony. In her 1997 autobiography, the actress described how the guru put his arms around her. These allegations soon spread through the camp with Mardas leading the charge against the Maharishi, determined to prove that he was having sex with his students despite a vow of celibacy.

> MCCARTNEY'S DEPARTURE WOULD MARK THE ARRIVAL OF ALEX MARDAS, A SELF-APPOINTED ELECTRONICS EXPERT WHO WOULD BE OUTSPOKEN IN HIS CRITICISM OF THE MAHARISHI

Mardas soon ramped up the accusations and alleged he found the Maharishi in a compromising position with another student. Many others, including George, Pattie Boyd and Cynthia Lennon, maintained the guru's innocence, yet enough suspicion had been planted in Lennon's mind for him to leave – even if it may have been a thinly-veiled excuse to get back to see Yoko Ono in London. George grudgingly agreed to return to the UK, too, although always dismissed Mardas' claims.

A livid Lennon gave one parting to the Maharishi when quizzed about the reasons for their hasty departure. "If you're so cosmic, you'll know why!" he snapped back. John even wrote the basis of what was to become the Maharishi critique *Sexy Sadie* while waiting for a taxi home. On the flight back to London, a drunken Lennon recounted his string of infidelities while married to Cynthia – a grim, earthly end to what was supposed their spiritual voyage of discovery. ●

Many of the era's biggest names in entertainment, such as Mia Farrow and Donovan, made to journey to India

20 ESSENTIAL

CLASSIC TRACKS

THE BEATLES' LATER YEARS PRODUCED A TREASURE TROVE OF SONGS THAT DISPLAYED MORE IMAGINATION AND EXPERIMENTATION THAN HAD EVER COME BEFORE. IAN WADE COMPILES OUR MUST-HAVE TRACK LIST FROM 1966 AND 1967

Having hung up their touring outfits in 1966, The Beatles had time to really explore the studio and start creating evermore inspiring and innovative music at a rate that would shame most acts of today. This selection of 20 songs spans the years 1966 and 1967, a period that saw the release of two of their greatest, of not *the* two greatest, Beatles albums of all time: *Revolver* and *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (as well as the *Magical Mystery Tour* EP).

It's the beginning of the imperial phase that all other imperial phases call 'Sir'. To try and condense the full background on these entries, some of which have had entire books dedicated to them, wasn't easy, but hopefully we can highlight the odd nugget you may not have spotted before.

Naturally, with a band as enormous as this, a lot of album tracks could be mistaken for having been singles, such was the culture and their significance. So sit back, peruse our selection, and enjoy some of the greatest pop music ever made.

PAPERBACK WRITER

PARLOPHONE 1966

Written by Paul after an aunt had requested that he put out a single that wasn't about love for a change, *Paperback Writer* was deliberately cut louder than previous releases, as it was one of the first Beatles tunes where the bass guitar had been boosted during recording with Paul playing his Rickenbacker and using a loudspeaker as a microphone. The Beatles made their one and only live appearance on *Top Of The Pops* to mime to both *Paperback Writer* and *Rain*, but the master tapes were infamously wiped by the BBC.

RAIN

PARLOPHONE 1966

Rain, along with its accompanying A-side *Paperback Writer*, were both recorded during sessions for *Revolver*. They even filmed several promotional films for it and, as George Harrison quipped in the *Anthology* film, "invented MTV". It was also the first pop song to feature backwards vocals, a happy accident after John had taken the tapes home and played around with them. A handy foretaste of what to expect from the upcoming album, it has been deemed one of Ringo's best drumming performances on record.

TAXMAN

PARLOPHONE 1966

The Beatles hadn't really been ones for politics, but that all changed when George realised that the band were liable to a 95% supertax introduced by Harold Wilson's Labour government. He wrote *Taxman* with a bit of help from John, who offered a few one-liners such as the backing vocal refrain referring to 'Mr Wilson' and Conservative leader 'Mr Heath'. With nods to the *Batman* theme, McCartney's Motown-y bass and Indian motif in Harrison's guitar solo, it became the first non-Lennon-McCartney number to open a Beatles album.

ELEANOR RIGBY

PARLOPHONE 1966

Paul claimed he had originally come up with the name 'Daisy Hawkins' as the lonesome protagonist, which he changed to 'Eleanor Bygraves' based on the actress Eleanor Bron, and altered the surname to 'Rigby' due to the name of a shop – Rigby & Evens – which he'd taken notice of when he was visiting Jane Asher in Bristol. In a strange twist, it was discovered that there was an Eleanor Rigby buried in the graveyard of St Peter's Church in Woolton, Liverpool, where Paul had met John for the first time in 1957.

HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE

PARLOPHONE 1966

Recorded towards the end of the sessions for *Revolver*, on *Here, There And Everywhere* McCartney's key inspiration was The Beach Boys' *God Only Knows*, having first heard it at a private listening party for *Pet Sounds*. Paul wrote it at Lennon's house a couple of weeks later. The layered backing vocals of John, Paul and George took three days to perfect. It was one of Paul's all-time top Beatles picks, a view shared by George Martin, and also John, who claimed it was "one of my favourite songs of The Beatles".

YELLOW SUBMARINE

PARLOPHONE 1966

A combination of two separate songs that John and Paul had written, with Paul's piece being the chorus and the rest worked out with John and a visiting Donovan, *Yellow Submarine* was initially meant to be like a children's song, and was specifically written with Ringo in mind. George Martin was able to use his background in sound effects for comedy records to add a nautical flavour to the finished product, which was first released on *Revolver*, and reached No.1 when issued as a double A-side with *Eleanor Rigby*.

STRAWBERRY FIELDS FOREVER

PARLOPHONE 1967

Strawberry Fields was a Salvation Army children's home near Lennon's home in Woolton, where he'd play with his childhood friends, and it was written by John while he was in Spain filming *How I Won The War*. It was the first track to be recorded for the *Sgt Pepper* sessions in late November 1966. When the song was released as a single its shifting tempo and Mellotron intro threw the fans a bit, and to add insult to injury, it was denied the No.1 position by Engelbert Humperdinck's *Release Me*.

PENNY LANE

PARLOPHONE 1967

Every Beatles fan who has ever ventured to Liverpool to retrace the steps of the band has been through Penny Lane. It's pretty much a bus terminus where the routes 46 and 99 that serve Walton, Old Swan and the city centre meet; the song's other landmarks such as the fire station at Mather Avenue is half a mile down the road, and the shelter on the roundabout has since been upgraded into a bistro. Although the largely McCartney composition was considered a hymn to their upbringing, the music video for the song wasn't actually filmed at Penny Lane.

TOMORROW NEVER KNOWS

PARLOPHONE 1966

Composed by John after he'd enjoyed some LSD while reading *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based On The Tibetan Book Of The Dead* and followed its instructions. Recorded at the start of sessions for *Revolver* in April 1966, *Tomorrow Never Knows* saw the band experiment with *musique concrète* techniques such as sound manipulation and tape loops. While held up as a psychedelic classic, the track is also considered a pioneering influence in electronic music.

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS

PARLOPHONE 1967

John and Paul crafted *With A Little Help From My Friends* as a song for Ringo, again keeping the tune deliberately minimal enough so that Starr wouldn't be stretching his limited vocal range too much. After an all-night session that went on until 6am, just as Ringo set off to go home, the group got him to record his vocal and stood around giving moral support. It's since become his signature tune, and closes every All-Starr Band performance. It became a massive hit when Joe Cocker released a version in 1968.

LUCY IN THE SKY WITH DIAMONDS

PARLOPHONE 1967

A song not about LSD, as if it needed further confirmation – both Lennon and McCartney have denied any such doing, with John insisting it was based on a nursery school drawing his son Julian had made. On that day, Julian had been picked up by his chauffeur, and when he arrived home he showed his dad and a visiting Ringo the painting and its title, and John was inspired. Recorded for inclusion on *Sgt Pepper* in April 1967, it would become a US No.1 when covered by Elton John in 1974 – a version which featured Lennon on guitar.

SHE'S LEAVING HOME

PARLOPHONE 1967

John and Paul wrote *She's Leaving Home* together after they'd seen a story in the newspaper. The actual girl in the piece, 17-year-old Melanie Coe, was later tracked down and confirmed that much of the song was accurate. Spookily, Coe had previously met McCartney when he judged her as the best dancer on an episode of *Ready Steady Go!*. The song is unique for the fact that no Beatle plays any instrument on it, and that the delicate string arrangement was not by George Martin (he was unavailable) but instead by Mike Leander.

WHEN I'M SIXTY-FOUR

PARLOPHONE 1967

When written from the perspective of a teenage Paul McCartney, 64 must have seemed positively ancient. But when Macca himself turned 64 in 2006, his kids got together at Abbey Road Studios to record a special version of the song (with help from George Martin's son, Giles). In 1967, Kenny Ball And His Jazzmen released a cover of *When I'm Sixty-Four* as a single, peaking at No.43 on the UK chart, while George Martin later produced a recording of the song by *Carry On* star Bernard Cribbins.

A DAY IN THE LIFE

PARLOPHONE 1967

The closer on *Sgt Pepper*, *A Day In The Life* managed to bring the avant garde into every household. John had written the verses by cutting up newspaper stories, William Burroughs-style, and Paul contributed the middle passage about the uneventful lot of a commuter. They instructed George Martin to fill a 24-bar middle section with a massive orchestral build-up, a session which turned into an unbroadcast 'happening' with assorted Rolling Stones, Marianne Faithfull and Michael Nesmith in attendance.

ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE

PARLOPHONE 1967

Within the same month as *Sgt Pepper* blowing the world's collective mind, The Beatles agreed to represent the UK in a global television event called *Our World*. Having decided against Paul's idea of performing *Hello, Goodbye*, the group went with this John-written number, and set about recording it in a marathon session on 14 June. Opening with *La Marseillaise*, to suggest the international nature of the affair, the song also references Glenn Miller's *In The Mood*, *Greensleeves* and the quartet's *She Loves You*.

HELLO, GOODBYE

PARLOPHONE 1967

Written by Paul, *Hello, Goodbye* came about after a conversation with Brian Epstein's assistant, Alistair Taylor. According to Taylor, he was visiting McCartney at home in St John's Wood and asked about how he wrote the songs, so Paul went on his harmonium and got Taylor to respond with the opposite of what Paul said. Being a bit far out, Paul reckoned the lyric reflected his sign of Gemini, saying, "It's a song about everything and nothing... if you have black you have to have white. That's the amazing thing about life."

MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

PARLOPHONE 1967

Recording began on 25 April 1967 on what would become the title track to the band's next film and accompanying EP. Using the old English holiday tradition of going off on a coach for a holiday expedition, Paul amped up the 'magical' aspect with references to drugs to give their friends – and those in the know – a laugh. It was not technically released as a standalone single but as part of a six-track EP. The screeching tyres in the final mix were taken from a recording of Ringo driving the coach used in the film around RAF West Malling at high speed.

THE FOOL ON THE HILL

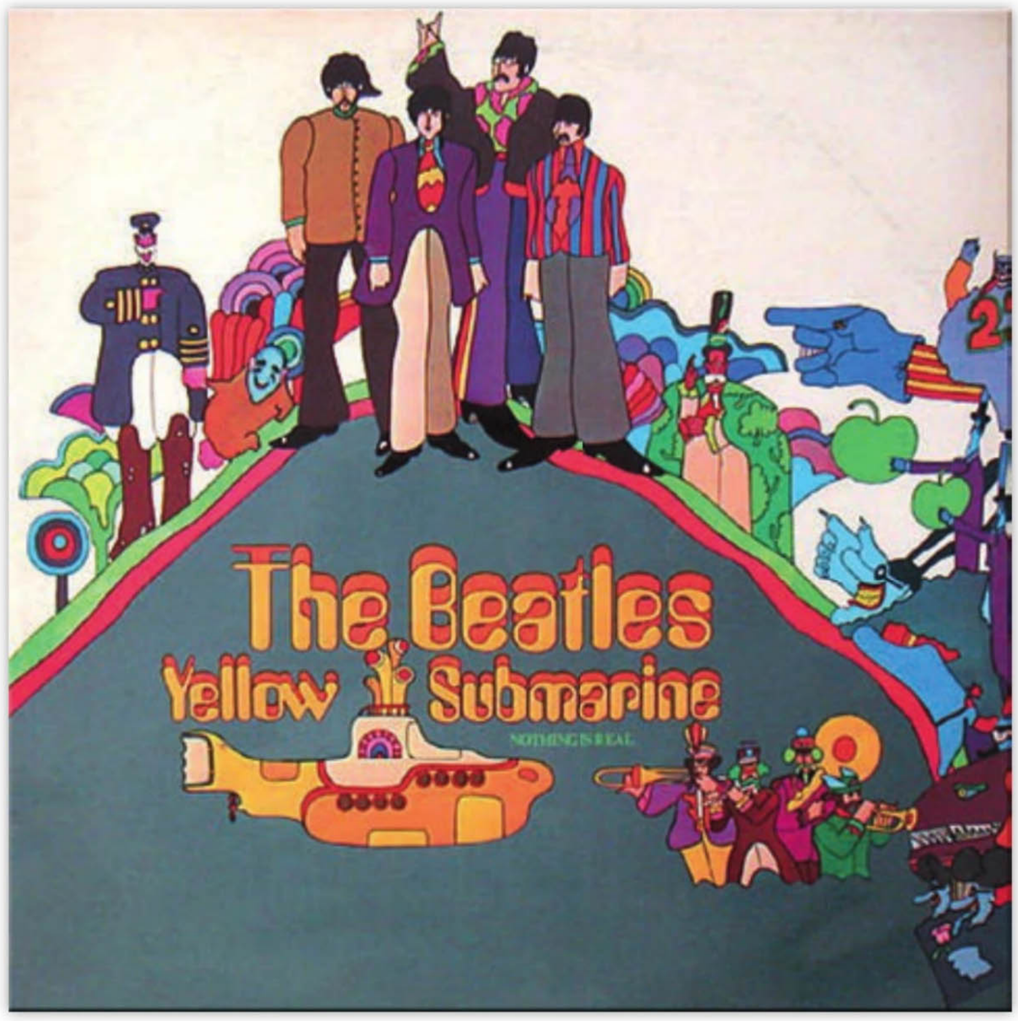
PARLOPHONE 1967

Written by Paul on his father's piano, *The Fool On The Hill* is said to be about Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. "His detractors called him a fool," McCartney later commented. "Because of his giggle he wasn't taken too seriously." Paul recorded a solo demo before the full band recorded it a few weeks later, including one slower, heavier version. On the version that ended up on the *Magical Mystery Tour* EP, Ray Thomas, flautist with The Moody Blues, along with bandmate Mike Pinder, played harmonica.

I AM THE WALRUS

APPLE 1967

Though this was a song that John had written in response to people over-analysing his lyrics, *I Am The Walrus* only made matters worse. It was compiled from three tunes he'd composed mostly on acid, inspired by police sirens, a poem about his garden and nonsense verse about a cornflake, while the walrus was borrowed from Lewis Carroll's *Alice In Wonderland*. On the band's first recording after Epstein's death, they decided to let rip, throwing even The Mike Sammes Singers into the mix. The song became the B-side to *Hello, Goodbye*.



IT'S ALL TOO MUCH

APPLE 1967

Written by George as a hymn to the joys of LSD, a substance he later renounced when he realised he got the same kick from Transcendental Meditation, *It's All Too Much* was recorded shortly after they'd finished *Sgt Pepper* and was released on the *Yellow Submarine* soundtrack as part of contractual obligations of recording four new songs to United Artists. With howling feedback and chaotic percussion, it was dismissed by the band as a bit of a racket, but it's since been deemed a pinnacle of British psychedelia.

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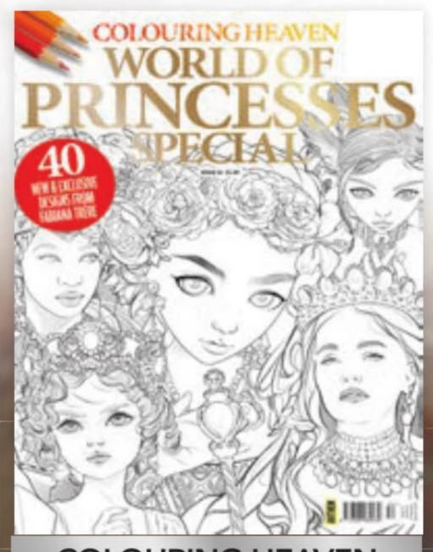

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UNPEELING THE APPLE

THEY GAVE US SOME OF POP'S MOST ICONIC MOMENTS, BUT BUSINESSMEN THEY WERE NOT. WITH HELP FROM FORMER APPLE RECORDS CEO TONY BRAMWELL, IAN RAVENDALE UNRAVELS THE DISASTER THAT WAS APPLE CORPS

Tony Bramwell, who had been childhood friends with both George and Paul and met John as a teenager, began working for NEMS, Brian Epstein's management company, in the early 1960s – but everything changed at NEMS after Epstein died on 27 August 1967 of an accidental overdose of sleeping tablets. "The Beatles didn't want anybody else to manage them," Bramwell points out. "When Brian died, NEMS was the biggest management company in the world. It was huge.

"But with him gone, the rest of the people at NEMS were squabbling about who was going to manage The Beatles. Many of the acts left, including Cilla Black, who had [husband] Bobby take over. With Brian's death, it became more than just a creative outlet – it turned into an industrial nightmare that covered everything."

As *Taxman* from the *Revolver* album bitterly chronicled, in the 60s, high earners like The Beatles were faced with tax demands of 'one for you, 19 for me'. There was £800,000 in royalties that needed spending, otherwise HM Revenue would be demanding a hefty cut. "They'd been thinking about starting a creative company called Apple and the name first appears on the *Sgt Pepper* credits," Bramwell reveals. "Apple Music Publishing was already set up and had signed some good people, like the Bee Gees, Cream, Steve Miller Band and Dr John."

Apple was not just a way of helping struggling artistes and branching out into other fields, it was also a tax-efficient business plan. Apple Corps would manage The Beatles partnership, as laid down in an agreement signed in April 1967 renewing the earlier Beatles Ltd contract. With time on their hands following the decision to stop touring, The Beatles and their inner circle would discover and bank-roll new talent with music publishing and making records being joined by film, electronics and retail ventures.

CORE VALUES

At Apple, naturally, there was a hierarchy. "At the top were the four Beatles, then came ▶

Ringo at the Apple Corps HQ: "We thought, now that Brian's gone, let's really amalgamate and get this thing going"

> THE BEATLES NEEDED FRESH TALENT, AND SO A POSTER CAMPAIGN IN LONDON AND THE PROVINCES WAS FOLLOWED BY IDENTICAL HALF-PAGE ADS TAKEN OUT IN THE NATIONAL MUSIC PRESS IN APRIL 1968

Neil Aspinall as managing director taking care of day-to-day business, Alistair Taylor as office manager, then the department heads – Denis O'Dell [films], Ron Kass [records] and Terry Doran [publishing]," Tony Bramwell explains. "Derek Taylor ran the press office. He was a useless press officer but very good with the official statements! Peter Brown took care of all the band's social activities; hotels, restaurants, holidays, that sort of thing."

To launch Apple Records, The Beatles needed fresh talent, and so a poster campaign in London and the provinces was followed by identical half-page ads taken out in the national music press in April 1968. Alistair Taylor played the part of a one-man band who really needed a break. Dressed in a hired costume, Taylor sang *When Irish Eyes Are Smiling* during the photo shoot. "This man has talent," read the copy. "One day he sang his songs to a tape recorder (borrowed from the man next door). In his neatest handwriting he wrote an explanatory note (giving his name and address) and, remembering to enclose a picture of himself, sent the tape, letter and photograph to Apple Music, 94 Baker Street, London W1. If you were thinking of doing the same thing yourself – do it now!"

The advert happily signed off: "This man now owns a Bentley!"

TAPE ONSLAUGHT

After the poster hit the streets and the *Melody Maker* and *NME* adverts were published, sackfuls of tapes arrived. Many included notes saying, in one way or another, 'Listen to me first!!!' "Thousands and thousands of tapes came in," remembers Bramwell. "Peter Asher and one of the A&R secretaries started listening to them but they were mainly rubbish, so in the end they gave up. It was an impossible task! We did find The Iveys, who went on to become Badfinger, plus Gallagher And Lyle – both initially as songwriters. Family also came to Apple Publishing."

On 11 May 1968 Lennon and McCartney flew to New York to officially announce the setting up of Apple Corps. "It's a business concerning records, films and electronics and, as a sideline, manufacturing or whatever," explained John at the press conference. ▶

English model Paulene Stone strikes a pose with members of The Fool design collective at the Apple Boutique, 29 November 1967

John Lennon and Paul McCartney at a press conference in New York to announce Apple Corps, 14 May 1968

"We want to set up a system whereby people who want to make a film about anything don't have to go down on their knees in somebody's office – probably yours. The aim of the company isn't really a stack of gold teeth in the bank. We've done that bit. It's more of a trick to see if we can get artistic freedom within a business structure and to see if we can create nice things and sell them without charging three times our cost."

George Harrison had excused himself from the press launch, for reasons he relates in the *Anthology* documentary and book: "I had very little to do with Apple. I was still in India when it started. I think it was basically John and Paul's madness – their egos running away with themselves or each other. There were a lot of ideas, but when it came down to it the only thing we could do successfully was write songs, make records and be Beatles." The Beatles were certainly more than qualified to assess and then guide struggling musicians and songwriters; as Harrison points out, where they came unstuck was with everything else. The possibility of a helping hand from the biggest band in the world drew applications from the wild and wonderful, total fantasists, spongers and chancers who knew an opportunity when they saw one.

REIGN OF CHAOS

Fortunately, Apple did have guidance from Caleb Ashburton-Dunning, their in-house tarot card and *I Ching* reader. The main Apple offices moved into 3 Savile Row in July 1968, with the basement earmarked for

APPLE INSPIRATION

When Paul McCartney moved to London from Liverpool in the mid-60s he became involved in the city's alternative arts scene, which led his path to cross with that of art dealer and gallery owner Robert Fraser. McCartney had discovered Belgian surrealist painter René Magritte and asked Fraser to see if he could find him any of his work.

"I was out in the garden with some friends," recalled Paul to Harriet Vyner, in an interview for her 1999 book *Groovy Bob: The Life And Times Of Robert Fraser*. "I think I was filming [Apple artist] Mary Hopkin with a film crew. We were out in the garden and Robert didn't want to interrupt, so when we went back in to the living room, there on the table he'd propped up this little Magritte. It was of a green apple. That became the basis of the Apple logo. Across the painting Magritte had written in that beautiful handwriting of his, 'Au Revoir'. When I saw it, I just thought: 'Robert'. Nobody else could have done that. Of course, we'd settle the bill later. He wouldn't hit me with a bill."

The 1966 painting Le Jeu De Mourre ('The Game of Mora') became the inspiration for the Apple logo, with the apple cut in half for the B-side. Gene Mahon was commissioned to design the labels. As he told Jonathan Green for his 2012 book *Days In The Life*: "What I brought to it was the idea that it can stand as a pure symbol. Let it never have any type on, put that all on the other side of the record. I didn't make any money out of it. NEMS were signing the bills and they were very loath to pay."

The idea of having no print on the full apple side was abandoned when EMI advised Apple that the contents of the record should appear on both sides of the disc for copyright and publishing reasons. Mahon's idea of using different images for each side remained, and photographer Paul Castell was hired to shoot pictures of green, red and yellow apples, both full and sliced. A green Granny Smith was chosen as the company's logo, with a sliced green apple as the B-side.

before arriving in London where they met Simon Hayes and Barry Finch, publicists working for Brian Epstein on his Saville Theatre enterprise, who asked them to design some stage costumes. This quickly lead to a joining of forces, with Finch becoming a designer and Hayes the business manager, and the team rebranding themselves as The Fool.

The Beatles were going through their psychedelic phase at the time and The Fool were commissioned to produce the colourful outfits for the Fabs to wear during the *All You Need Is Love* performance broadcast as part of the *Our World* satellite link-up. More Beatles commissions included the outfit giving John's piano a colourful makeover and designing a fireplace for George. Striking while the garish iron was hot, The Fool suggested to the band that they collaborate on a boutique venture. The Beatles had been playing with the idea of opening a chain of retail clothes stores, and Apple's three-storey Georgian townhouse on Baker Street was chosen as the outlet.

The Beatles' own recording studio. "The ground floor at Apple was pretty industrious," says Bramwell. "This was the record company, which was me and Jack Oliver, and my little film business making promos for The Beatles. The rest of the building was chaos!"

The Beatles all had individual offices where they could take appointments, as Lennon relates in *Anthology*: "I tried to see everybody. I saw everyone day in, day out and there wasn't anyone with anything to offer to society or me. There was just 'I want, I want' and 'Why not?' – terrible scenes going on in the office, with hippies and all different people getting very wild with me."

The Fool were initially a trio of Dutch fashion designers, comprising Simon Posthuma, Josje Leeger and Marijke Koger. They'd travelled around Europe

CHOICE ITEMS

Within months, Apple Corps funnelled £100,000 into the venture and also found The Fool somewhere to live. The day-to-day running of the shop was delegated to John's old school friend and former member of The Quarrymen Pete Shotton, assisted by Harrison's sister-in-law Jenny Boyd. The Fool designed a psychedelic painting to cover the exterior of the building. Without bothering with trivialities like planning permission, they enlisted 30 or so art students to do the work. The Apple Boutique opened on 7 December 1967 and had an interior co-ordinated with the exterior. As a novel twist, everything was up for sale, not just clothes, but the furniture, artwork and even the crockery.

Nearby shops were getting nothing like the attention of the flower power-themed boutique and picketed the local council, ultimately resulting in the cosmic façade having to be white-washed over in May 1968. The Beatles were total novices in retail and soon became seen as a soft touch. There was very little stock control and goods (and often money) would go missing. The band themselves and their nearest and dearest had no qualms about dropping by to pick out new outfits, and neither did The Fool.

The relationship between The Fool and Apple had deteriorated and, unusually for them, the designers made a low-key exit from Apple, leaving major outstanding monies in their wake. Embarrassed by the whole thing, The Beatles took no further action. Their excursion into retail had proved an expensive lesson for the band.

"The Fool were very amusing," reflects Tony Bramwell. "And colourful. But not everybody wanted to dress as a court jester. When we got rid of them the shop actually started doing quite well, with more contemporary clothes. There was an article in one of the music papers written by John Peel, saying that The Beatles were now 'in the rag trade'... which really got up John Lennon's nose."

In July 1968 the shop's remaining staff were given two weeks' notice, after which the entire contents would be given away, one item per person. The night before, the band and their wives and girlfriends went round and picked out choice items, before the remaining £15,000 worth of clothes was appropriated by a public rampage in front of the TV cameras. What this generosity didn't take into account was that as far as the taxman was concerned, goods couldn't just be given away, and Purchase Tax (the predecessor of VAT) would still be liable, adding to the mounting mess that were the Apple accounts.

Beatles fans queue outside the Apple Boutique on the day of its closing, when all its remaining stock was given away

MAGIC MAYHEM

Electronics was one of Apple's other five areas of interest and potentially a very lucrative one. The main problem was that The Beatles' guide through the often baffling world of gizmos was Alexis Mardas, aka 'Magic Alex', a Greek TV repairman who John introduced as his "new guru". Mardas talked a good fight and amongst the inventions he claimed to be developing was wallpaper which would act as loudspeakers, electrical paint which could be applied to walls and then plugged in, and cars that changed colour the faster they went. Using the V12 engines out of John and George's Ferraris, Alex reckoned he could power a flying saucer. More dangerously, he was an advocate of trepanning, where a hole drilled into the human head was thought to give cosmic insight – a theory nobody felt inclined to test.

Abbey Road had just gone up to eight-track recording but Mardas claimed he could do better. George Martin explained the debacle in *Anthology*: "Magic Alex said that EMI was no good and he could build a better studio. Well, he didn't and when we recorded in Savile Row I had to equip it with EMI gear... Alex had forgotten to put any holes in the wall between the studio and the control room so we had to run the cable out through the door. We had a nasty twitter in one corner that came from the air-conditioning which we had to switch off whenever we recorded."

The second boutique, Apple Tailoring, was located at 161 King's Road, Chelsea

SOLO SIGNINGS

Many early Apple artists were soloists. Twiggy had recommended Mary Hopkin to Paul after seeing her on *Opportunity Knocks*. McCartney had seen Francesca and Gene Raskin perform *Those Were The Days* at London's Blue Angel Club. The song combined their English lyrics with Boris Fomin's original Russian music. "Paul had been to see Noel Harrison in cabaret," says Tony Bramwell. "And supporting him was a male-female duo who did *Those Were The Days*, which Paul thought was a great song. He led it away in the back of his mind to do something with it one day." Sung by Hopkin, the song reached No.1, Apple's second chart-topper after *Hey Jude*.

James Taylor was put in touch with Apple head of A&R Peter Asher by guitarist Danny Kortchmar who he knew from the Peter & Gordon days. Danny had played with James in The Flying Machine; the band had broken up and Taylor was in London after wandering around Europe. At Kortchmar's suggestion he came into Apple to see Peter, sat on the floor and played a couple of songs.

Taylor was brought back in to play for McCartney and signed on the spot. "James's Apple album was recorded at Trident Studios with Richard Hewson, the arranger who did *Those Were The Days*," explains Bramwell. "It was a tremendous album! It came out and started to do things. James did a *BBC2 In Concert* show and there was a good response from radio and some good gigs. Allen Klein was getting rid of people. He got rid of Peter and James went with him!" Taylor was successfully signed to Warner Brothers in 1969.

Another male soloist came from a lot closer to home. Jackie Lomax had been a member of The Undertakers, Liverpool's biggest group prior to The Beatles. *Sour Milk Sea*, his first Apple single, was written and produced by George Harrison (George, Paul and Ringo also played on it), but the single and subsequent album failed to make an impact. Between 1968's *Hey Jude* and 1996's *Real Love* (both by The Beatles), Apple released 60 singles by artists including Badfinger, Hot Chocolate, Billy Preston and Brute Force.

IN JULY 1968 THE SHOP'S REMAINING STAFF WERE GIVEN TWO WEEKS' NOTICE, AFTER WHICH THE ENTIRE CONTENTS WOULD BE GIVEN AWAY, ONE ITEM PER PERSON

The tough-talking Allen Klein with John Lennon and Yoko Ono, 29 April 1969

"It was chaos, the biggest disaster of all time," Harrison continued. "He didn't have a clue. It was a 16-track system and he had 16 little speakers all around the walls. You only need two speakers for stereo sound. It was awful. The whole thing was a disaster and had to be ripped out."

Alex had said he could build The Beatles a 72-track studio. "We bought some huge computers from British Aerospace in Weybridge and put them in my barn," Ringo recalled. "Birds and mice lived in them, but they never left that barn. It was a far-out idea but Alex never came through. We'd just graduated to eight-track... God knows what we thought we were going to do with 72!" Lennon came to realise that perhaps he hadn't found his guru after all. "He was just another guy that comes and goes around people like us," he said. "He's alright but he's cracked. He means well."

HANGERS-ON

Despite their mainstream popularity, The Beatles were seen as leading lights of the counter-culture. In Haight-Ashbury Harrison had made a throwaway comment to some Hells Angels that if they were ever in London, they should drop by. Sometime later the bikers turned up at Apple HQ, moved in and, with various hangers-on, overstayed their welcome until George persuaded them to go. "No one thought they'd want to move in!" says Tony. "There was also Ken Kesey and other alternative types, plus a couple of guys from the Quicksilver Messenger Service too."

After this incident, The Beatles realised that too many people were getting a free ride. Things had to change. This included stopping paying friends for doing very little, cutting back on the number of secretaries in the press office, and not embarking on projects with the likes of Magic Alex that had very little chance of commercial success. Money was coming in and then going out, often with no real knowledge where it had come from or where it was going. Paul, the most efficient Beatle, resolved to make the Apple office more professional and less a place where cronies could drop by, have a drink, smoke a joint, chew the fat and then wander off. As George remembered: "I went into the office and there were rooms full of lunatics, all kinds of hangers-on trying to get a gig. And because it was the hippy period, everybody was super-friendly. Basically, it was chaos."

> THE WRITING WAS ON THE WALL FOR BOTH APPLE AND THE BEATLES. THE ATMOSPHERE CHANGED OVERNIGHT. APPLE BECAME A GHOST TOWN WITH KLEIN AND HIS TEAM IN CHARGE

THE HAMMER FALLS

Eventually, the band acknowledged that they weren't cut out to be businessmen. The music side was doing well, but Apple was a mess that someone needed to sort out. Paul wanted Lee Eastman, a New York entertainment lawyer (and father of girlfriend Linda) and his son John. Lennon, however, wanted Allen Klein,

Lennon strolls through Athens with Yoko Ono and their host, 'Magic Alex'

who had managed The Rolling Stones and netted them a $600,000 advance from Decca, and he persuaded George and Ringo to go along with him.

"George and Ringo went with John because they didn't want Paul's father-in-law managing them," says Tony. "If he'd picked somebody else, well, maybe. Paul could see that. But he didn't have anybody else to turn to." The two contenders were very different. Eastman was polite and controlled; Klein was ruthless and liked to play the tough guy. With a three-to-one vote in favour, Klein became Apple's business manager on 3 February 1969.

"Klein was after The Beatles from day one," Bramwell explains. "When the British Invasion thing happened in the States he signed The Stones to Atlantic, Herman's Hermits to MGM and The Dave Clark Five to Epic. And then signed them to himself!" He could sometimes be economical with the truth too. "Klein convinced John and Yoko that The Beatles were going broke," Bramwell continues. "They weren't going broke at all."

The writing was on the wall for both Apple and The Beatles. The atmosphere changed overnight. Employees found they no longer had employment. Magic Alex went on holiday and returned to discover he'd been let go. Apple became a ghost town with Klein and his team in charge.

Bramwell concludes: "Klein had got rid of everybody. Apart from a couple of secretaries I was the only one left, so I became chief executive. I'd made a name for myself as an ace promotion man. I think Klein quite liked me! I didn't pose any threat to him. Also, I knew everything about him because of my American lawyer friends. Then I got bored and left! I was the only person who left without being fired." ●

THE LIFE AQUATIC

ONCE UPON A TIME... OR MAYBE TWICE, THERE WAS AN UNEARTHLY PARADISE CALLED PEPPERLAND. STEVE HARNELL TAKES COVER FROM THE BLUE MEANIES IN THE YELLOW SUBMARINE

Few works of artistic greatness have sprung from the phrase 'contractual obligation' but for The Beatles' *Yellow Submarine* movie, we can make a very honourable exception.

By 1968, a third Beatle feature-length affair distributed by United Artists was destined to hit the big screen whether the band liked it or not. After the success of the witty exploitation flick *A Hard Day's Night* and its stoned Technicolor successor, *Help!*, The Beatles dropped the ball somewhat with the self-indulgent TV special *Magical Mystery Tour*. Not unsurprisingly, their enthusiasm to return to either the big or small screen was somewhat diminished. But a pragmatic solution lay at hand, allowing them to fulfil their contract with very little effort.

At the height of Beatlemania, Brian Epstein had agreed a deal with Al Brodax and US production company King Features that they could make an animated TV series about the band. An option of making a full-length movie was also taken out by the company. A total of 39 episodes of that original cartoon series, *The Beatles*, was made between 1965 and 1967, essentially preserving the look of the foursome from their *Hard Day's Night* era with sharp suits, mop-tops and Beatle boots.

American actor Paul Frees (Boris Badenov in the cartoon series *The Adventures Of Rocky And Bullwinkle And Friends*) took the roles of John and George, with a rather freewheeling and totally inaccurate take on their accents, while Lance Percival – who rose to fame as a key member of the iconic BBC satire show *That Was The Week That Was* – played Paul and Ringo. Percival would later take the roles of both Young and Old Fred in the *Yellow Submarine* movie.

At the time of transmission, The Beatles were far from enamoured with their TV counterparts, hence their reluctance to become involved with the big screen incarnation. Worried that the filmmakers would 'Disney-fy' them, they not unreasonably kept their involvement to a bare minimum, only meeting with the movie's creative team on a couple of occasions to knock about some loosely-formed ideas. Instead, they agreed to write a handful of ▶

The Fabs announce their involvement in the making of *Yellow Submarine*

new songs specifically for the project, with classics from their back catalogue also being brought into play.

But whereas the television show was a slight, knockabout catalogue of Hanna-Barbera-style slapstick that leant heavily on outmoded British stereotypes, the movie evolved into something far more expansive, ambitious and substantial. Rather grandly, and not without foundation, the filmmakers later described *Yellow Submarine* as "open-ended Rorschach with Joycian puns".

WHEREAS THE TELEVISION SHOW WAS A SLIGHT, KNOCKABOUT CATALOGUE OF HANNA-BARBERA-STYLE SLAPSTICK, THE MOVIE EVOLVED INTO SOMETHING FAR MORE EXPANSIVE

ALL TOGETHER NOW

The movie's eureka moment at the planning stages, though, was when Heinz Edelmann's distinctive designs were spotted in the influential German magazine *Twen*. When the studio approached him to come up with character sketches for the movie, Edelmann created what have now become the iconic cartoon images of the band in less than a week.

With the London-based feature film project agreed, Brodax drafted in Canadian animation filmmaker George Dunning to direct the movie, with John Coates overseeing its production in the capital. A budget of $1 million was tabled and a 200-strong team assembled and given just 11 months to make the *Sgt Pepper*-inspired dream a reality. Wholly against usual practice, the filmmakers started production on the movie without a final script or storyboard in place; the style of animation simply evolved as they went along.

Months of studying The Beatles' movements, mannerisms and humour went into capturing the band's distinctive dynamic. Edelmann explains: "A walk formula was necessary to maintain [The Beatles'] characters. George, John and Paul move at 32 frames per second, while Ringo – the shortest – plods along at 24. George walks like a cowboy; Paul like a confident young executive; John like a showman and Ringo like a schoolboy Charlie Chaplin.

***Yellow Submarine* received widespread acclaim from critics and audiences alike**

McCartney giving the double thumbs up in the movie editing suite, 1 February 1968

"Each of The Beatles is characterised by a well-known part of his personality, naturally," he continues. "Paul is introduced as a 'Mod Mozart' playing serious music in a museum; George appears out of a haze of Transcendental Meditation, the mystic philosophy he popularised. John, author of *In His Own Write*, emerges from a classic literary creation and Ringo is pictured as his inimitable self, wandering winsomely by the shore in Liverpool just as he did in *A Hard Day's Night*."

VOICING THE BEATLES

It proved impossible to get all four of the band into the studio to record their voice parts, so with the movie slipping behind schedule, it was decided to find actors to replace them. Apart from the estimable talents of Lance Percival, a mixture of established names and virtually unknown talent was assembled as the voiceover cast.

Cheshire-born Geoffrey Hughes, who went on to play a long-running *Coronation Street* character, the cheery binman Eddie Yeats, and workshy Onslow in the sitcom *Keeping Up Appearances*, provided Paul's chipper tones. John Clive, whose diverse CV had included *The Italian Job* before he featured in *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Pink Panther Strikes Again*, was well cast as the cynical Lennon. The multi-talented Paul Angelis was particularly busy, voicing the Chief Blue Meanie and Ringo.

Harrison's voice was toughest to replicate. Remarkably, Coates and Dunning at first cast total unknown (and non-actor) Peter Batten after overhearing him talking at the bar of their local watering hole near the animation studio. In the end, Batten appears in the movie's first half and was later replaced by Angelis for the remaining part of the film. It's been reported that during the making of *Yellow Submarine*, Batten was found to have been a deserter from the British Army of the Rhine in Germany and subsequently arrested.

The most established member of the whole cast was the comedy actor and writer Dick Emery, who turns in a poignant characterisation of Jeremy Hillary Boob, PhD, an affectionate satire of pseudo-intellectuals.

Speaking in the VH1 documentary about the movie, Angelis explained: "We didn't imitate their voices. We tried to recreate what we thought were their voices. The thing is, none of The Beatles liked their own voices that had been done by us. Ringo said: 'I don't really like my voice. The others like it, but I don't. And they all feel the same about their voices'. So they all thought that our impressions of their mates were acceptable, but not them."

After several drafts and with the movie already in ▶

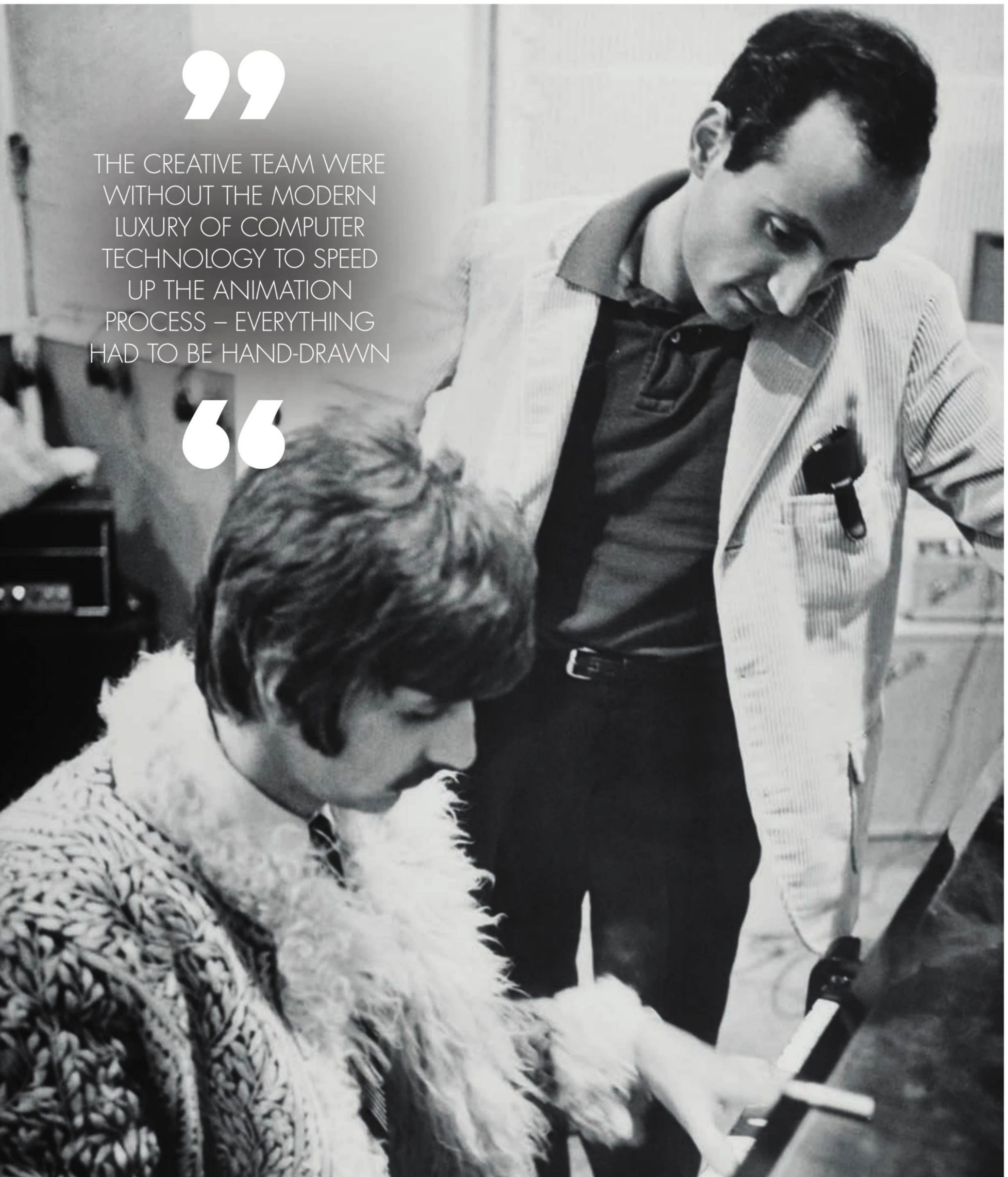
production, Brodax decided the script was still not up to scratch. He contacted Erich Segal, future author of the best-seller *Love Story*, who was an assistant professor at Yale University at the time. Segal explains: "[Brodax said] 'I'm gonna give you the chance of a lifetime. I need a rewrite fast – in three weeks. Are you gonna come?' [to London]. I said, 'I hear this picture's a cartoon. I don't want to write cartoons.' He said, 'Segal, don't you understand, *Sgt Pepper* has already sold three million albums'. I didn't know who Sgt Pepper was so I said, 'Mrs Pepper must be very happy!'"

POETRY PLEASE

Although uncredited, the poet Roger McGough was responsible for much of the Beatle dialogue in the movie. "When I saw the script I could see why, in fact, I had been brought in," McGough related. "It read as though it had been set in the Bronx or somewhere. The Beatles sorta spoke American-Jewish. It wasn't so much that it wasn't funny, but it was not Liverpudlian. It's the rhythm and the sing-song element, which as a poet, I was able to help with."

Robert Balser and Jack Stokes oversaw two animation teams while a third creative genius, Charlie Jenkins, was tasked with coming up with the special scenes, including the striking *Eleanor Rigby* sequence at the start of the movie and the psychedelic animation of the 'Sea of Science' segment that backs George's *It's Only A Northern Song*. The images of the animators themselves were incorporated into the *Eleanor Rigby* scene. Edelmann adds: "I'm in there as one of the men holding an umbrella. In a way, this film is a sort of biography of the people who worked on it". The animation style of the *Eleanor Rigby* scene in particular would have an

> THE CREATIVE TEAM WERE WITHOUT THE MODERN LUXURY OF COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY TO SPEED UP THE ANIMATION PROCESS – EVERYTHING HAD TO BE HAND-DRAWN



John Lennon, Yoko Ono and Paul McCartney at the premiere of *Yellow Submarine* at the London Pavilion, 1968

Ringo Starr with Dr Erich Segal, Yale University professor and co-writer of *Yellow Submarine*

immediate influence on the work of Terry Gilliam and his segments for *Monty Python's Flying Circus*.

The creative team were, of course, without the modern luxury of computer technology to speed up the animation process – everything had to be hand-drawn, with the odd exception of some nifty use of Letraset to animate the submarine itself as it twisted and turned beneath the sea. The laborious and time-consuming animation process soon left the movie lagging behind the planned schedule and Coates was forced to quickly come up with a plan to salvage the project and hit their looming premiere deadline.

He explained in the movie's DVD commentary track: "As we headed off into the last three or four months [of production] we were told we were behind schedule. I've never worked on any animated film of any length, that wasn't at some point. We were not able to find any ladies to do the tracing and painting – it was mainly ladies in those days – and we weren't sure how the hell we were going to get all the colouring finished.

"AND WE LIVE BENEATH THE WAVES"

We join the action of *Yellow Submarine* as the peace of Pepperland is threatened by an unexpected and vicious attack by the music-hating Blue Meanies. 'Apple Bonkers', a nod to The Beatles' record company, dispatch local citizens before ageing sailor Old Fred makes his escape to fetch help from beyond.

Fred makes it to another dimension – or Liverpool to be precise – where he rounds up The Beatles for his quest to save Pepperland. The assembled crew then travel through several weird and wonderful dimensions including the Sea of Time, the Sea of Science (animated by a psychedelic Charlie Jenkins-helmed segment), the Foothills of the Headlands and the Sea of Holes, negotiating breakdowns and the Vacuum Thrask.

Pepperland has by now become a bleak wasteland with the Blue Meanies suppressing the joy of its inhabitants. But The Beatles have the answer – upon discovering the costumes of Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, who had previously protected the land, they step into their shoes and force the Blue Meanies to retreat by the power of music. By the time the band play *All You Need Is Love*, Pepperland is restored to its former colourful glory and even the Blue Meanies learn the error of their ways.

MERCH ADO ABOUT SOMETHING

Early Beatles merchandise often ranged from the cheap and cheerful to the plain ridiculous – from fake mop-top wigs (naturally) and plastic guitars to bubble bath.

But the ongoing legacy of *Yellow Submarine* has created a merchandise industry in itself and the list of associated products just keeps on growing. All manner of tie-in merch has been produced from an original – and now much-prized by collectors – Corgi miniature of the Yellow Submarine through to clothing, socks, mugs, action figures and pinball machines. For the Beatle-loving youngster in your life, there are also lunch boxes, jigsaws, storybooks, baby grows, bibs and sippy cups.

Beatle buffs are also permanently on the lookout for packs of *Yellow Submarine* sweet cigarettes from the era (they were simpler times) with associated picture cards. A mint condition box of these is so rare that an example will now set you back the best part of £900. Fancy some original cartoon Beatles coathangers to keep your Sgt Pepper outfit in peak condition? Well, you'll need to shell out almost £500 for a set of four.

More recently, Lego announced a 550-piece *Yellow Submarine* set – a snip at a mere £65 whilst it was available. The set features John, Paul, George and Ringo figures together with Jeremy Hillary Boob, plus a nine-inch long submarine with two rotating propellers, four periscopes and, most importantly, an adjustable rudder.

"We decided that we'd get out to all the art schools in London to try to persuade them to come in and form a nightshift. A bus went out every evening and picked art students up, brought them into the studio and at 6.30pm or 7pm they took over the desks of the staff people and worked through the night. I remember serving meals on wheels – sausage and mash – and they'd work through to the early morning. Without their help we would never have got the film made. The spirit of it was fantastic and I think the feeling comes out on the screen."

John and Paul often called up with script suggestions, including that Ringo would be followed down the street by a submarine – an idea that made it into the finished movie. Lennon explained: "Brodax got half of *Yellow Submarine* out of my mouth. The idea for the Hoover, the machine that sucks people up – all those were [mine].

Aside from composing and performing the songs, the real Beatles participated only in the closing scene of the movie

ALTHOUGH LENNON DISMISSED HIS OWN EFFORT *HEY BULLDOG* AS 'A GOOD-SOUNDING RECORD THAT MEANS NOTHING', IT'S A DYNAMIC PERFORMANCE FROM THE BAND

made it onto the eventual soundtrack album, the cynical protest about the dominance of the Lennon-McCartney songwriting partnership *It's Only A Northern Song* and his swirling psychedelic ode to LSD, *It's All Too Much*. Of the former, George explained: "It's a joke relating to Liverpool, the Holy City in the North. The copyright belonged to Northern Songs Limited, which I didn't own… so 'It doesn't really matter what chords I play, what words I say, or time of day it is, as it's only a northern song'." At the time, George only received a nominal amount of payment from the company and was regarded as nothing more than a contract songwriter.

McCartney's contribution was the music hall-influenced children's ditty *All Together Now*, recorded on 12 May 1967. Although Lennon dismissed his own effort *Hey Bulldog* as "a good-sounding record that means nothing", it's a dynamic performance from the band and one of the most overlooked gems in their back catalogue. *Hey Bulldog* was one of the last songs laid down in the studio before The Beatles left for their Rishikesh sojourn and arrived unexpectedly when the foursome were filming a promo for their 1968 single, *Lady Madonna*. A few days earlier, Paul had drummed on a track called *The Dog Presides* by Paul Jones, formerly of Manfred Mann. Improvising canine howls much to the delight of Lennon, The Beatles' off-the-cuff track soon evolved from an original *Hey Bullfrog* to *Hey Bulldog*.

The second side of the album, bizarrely released a full six months after the movie that it soundtracked and was supposedly promoting, featured seven instrumental cues written by George Martin, deftly dropping nods to Bach and Stravinsky into the mix.

THE SUBMARINE SURFACES

The sound of the collective shrug from The Beatles and their team around the time of the *Yellow Submarine* album's release was deafening. Remarkably, press officer Derek Taylor "couldn't be bothered" to write sleevenotes for the soundtrack, and instead he reprinted *The Observer*'s review of 'The White Album', which was released two months previously.

In retrospect, the band viewed the movie warmly ▶

They used to come to the studio and chat, 'Hi John, old bean. Got any ideas for the film?' I'd just spout out all this stuff, and they went off and did it."

As part of the contract with United Artists, The Beatles had to provide at least three songs for the movie. Some were written specifically for the project while others were unreleased efforts deemed unsuitable or unworthy of inclusion on *Sgt Pepper*. Lennon, in particular, appeared to treat the whole process with disdain, often dismissively joking in the studio after an under-par take of a particular song: "It'll do for the film."

The band do, in fact, make a blink-and-you'll-miss-it live action appearance as the end credits are about to roll. "What's the matter, John love?" quips Paul as Lennon spies Blue Meanies through his binoculars.

Two Harrison offcuts from the *Sgt Pepper* sessions

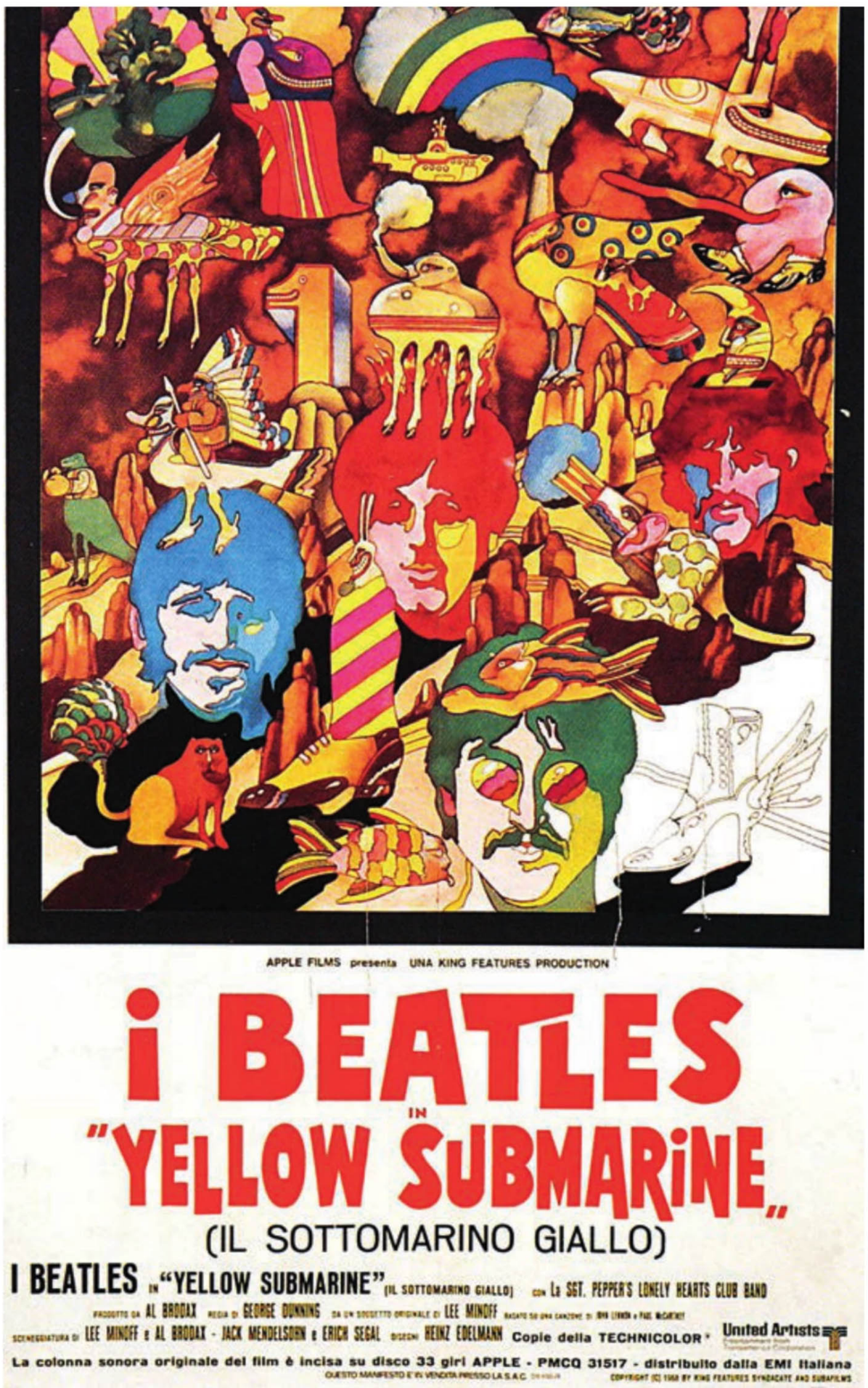
Cardboard cutouts of band's *Yellow Submarine* characters were made for the short film, *A Mod Odyssey*

and were thankfully a little more gracious for those who slaved around the clock to finish the project. In the *Anthology* book, Paul explains: "I was surprised when they took the psychedelic option. I thought the producers were after something a little bit more commercial, which would have been okay with me. I wanted *Yellow Submarine* to be more of a classic cartoon. I love the Disney films so I thought this could have been the greatest cartoon ever – only with our music. That would have been a lovely mix. They didn't want that, though, and luckily it wasn't my decision. Looking back on the film, I do like it now. They felt they ought to pick up on where we had been up to, which was *Sgt Pepper* – but a *Bambi* would have been better for me at the time."

In the *Anthology* book George also recalls: "I liked the film. I think it's a classic. I'm not sure why we didn't do our own voices, but the actors probably did it better because they needed to be more cartoon-like. Our voices were pretty cartoon-like anyway, but the exaggeration that you've got with the actors' voices suits it."

Ringo adds: "I loved *Yellow Submarine*. I thought it was very innovative. The thing with the film that still blows me away is that in the first year it was out I had all these kids coming up to me saying, 'Why did you press the button?' In the film I press a button and get shot out of the submarine – and kids from all over the bloody world kept shouting, 'Why did you press the

George Harrison poses with a Blue Meanie at the press screening of *Yellow Submarine*



The Italian film poster for *Yellow Submarine*

> *PUNCH* OBSERVED THAT THE SONGS USED ON THE SOUNDTRACK 'SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN CONCEIVED AND BROUGHT FORTH IN THE PURE SIMPLE SPIRIT OF MYSTICAL INNOCENCE, LIKE THE PAINTINGS OF CHAGALL'

button?' at me as if it was real. They actually thought it was me."

Indeed, the film was well received at the time of its release. British satirical magazine *Punch* observed that the songs of Lennon and McCartney used on the soundtrack "seemed to have been conceived and brought forth in the pure simple spirit of mystical innocence, like the paintings of Chagall". The seven-minute mini-documentary *A Mod Odyssey* that trailed the movie grandly proclaims that it "breaks new ground in the art of animation. Just as Swift and Carroll changed the history of literature, as Chagall and Picasso brought new life to art; The Beatles are revitalising the art of animation".

Perhaps one wag summarises it best, though, simply stating *Yellow Submarine* is: "the best film The Beatles never made". ●

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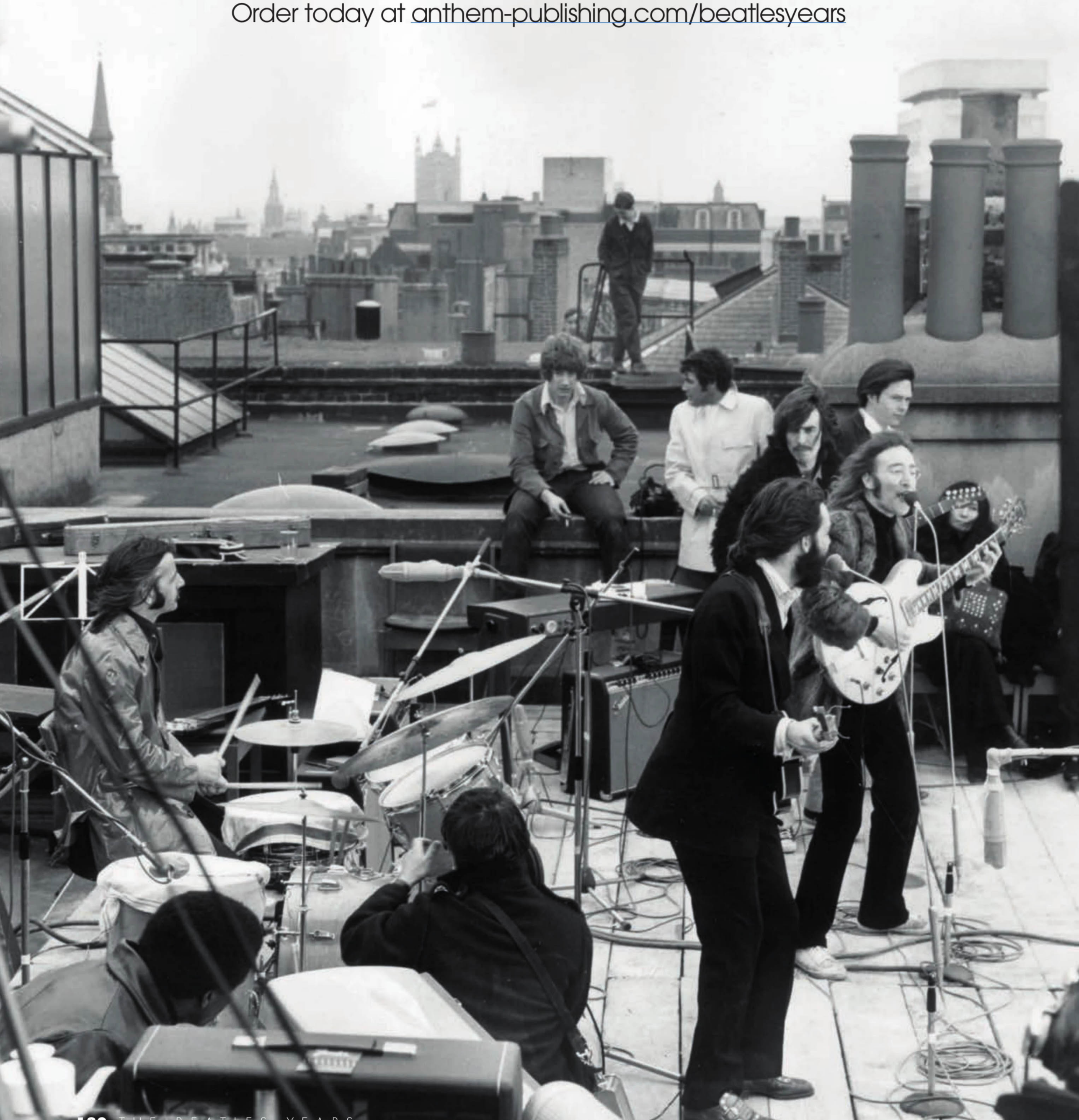

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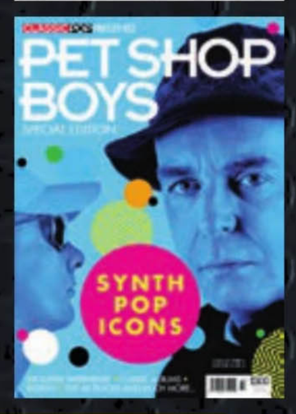

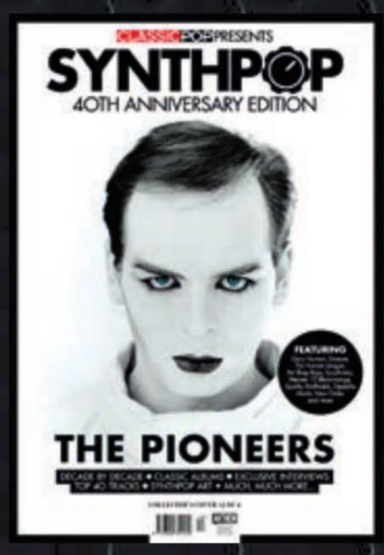

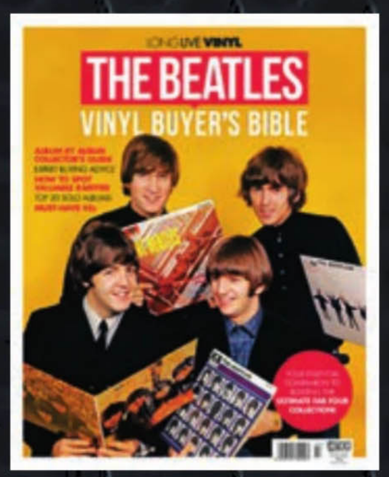

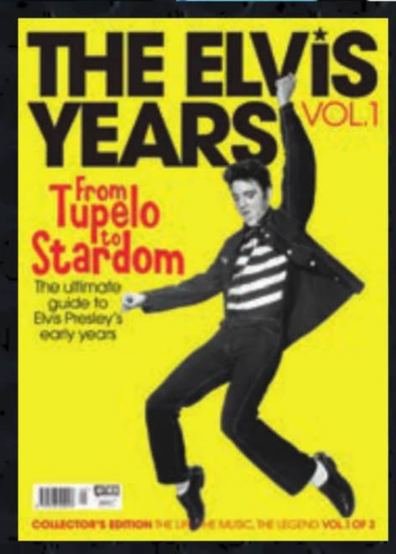

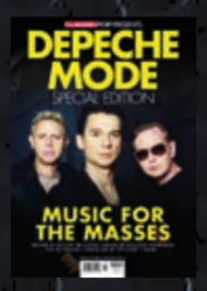

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